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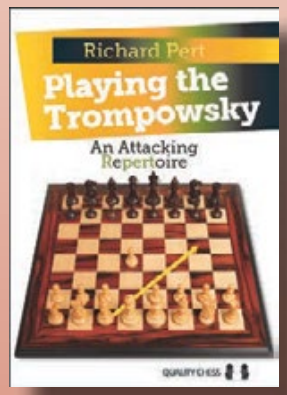

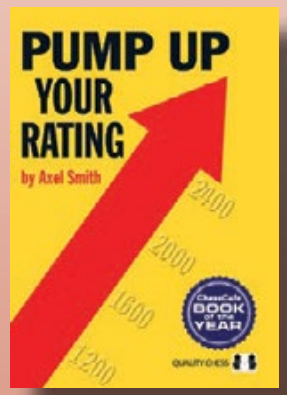

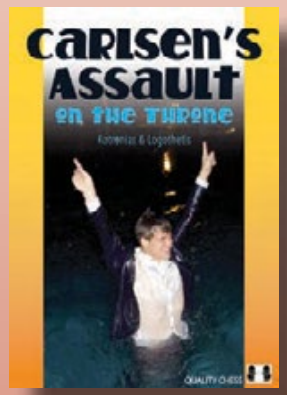

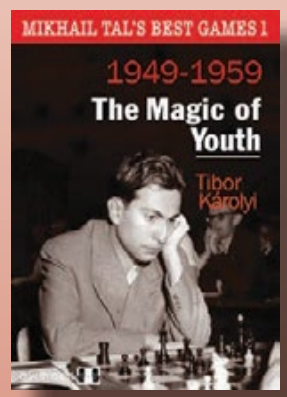

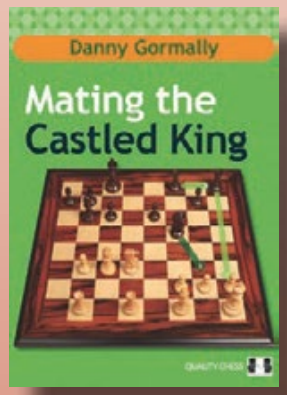

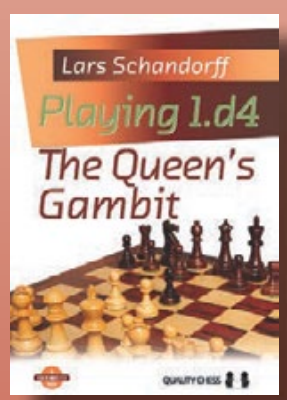

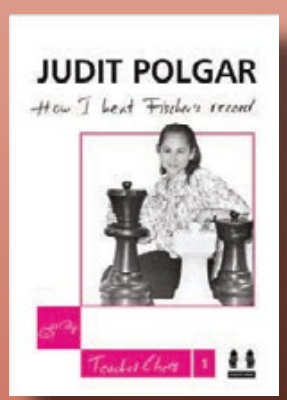

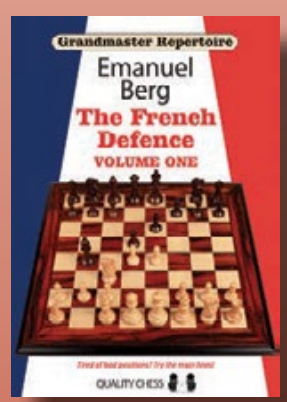

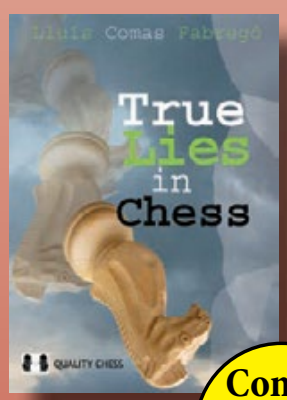

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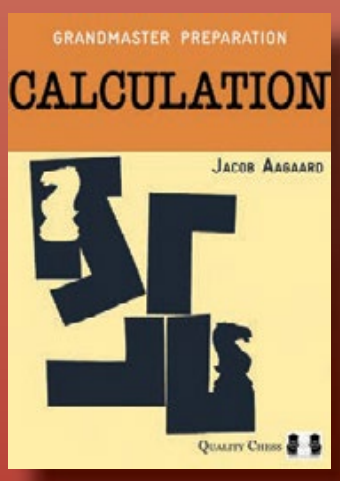

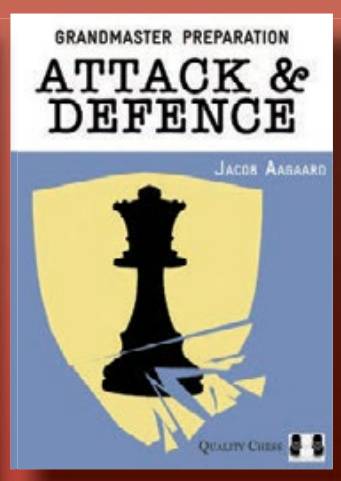

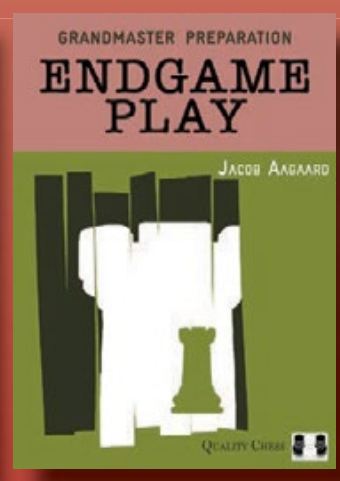

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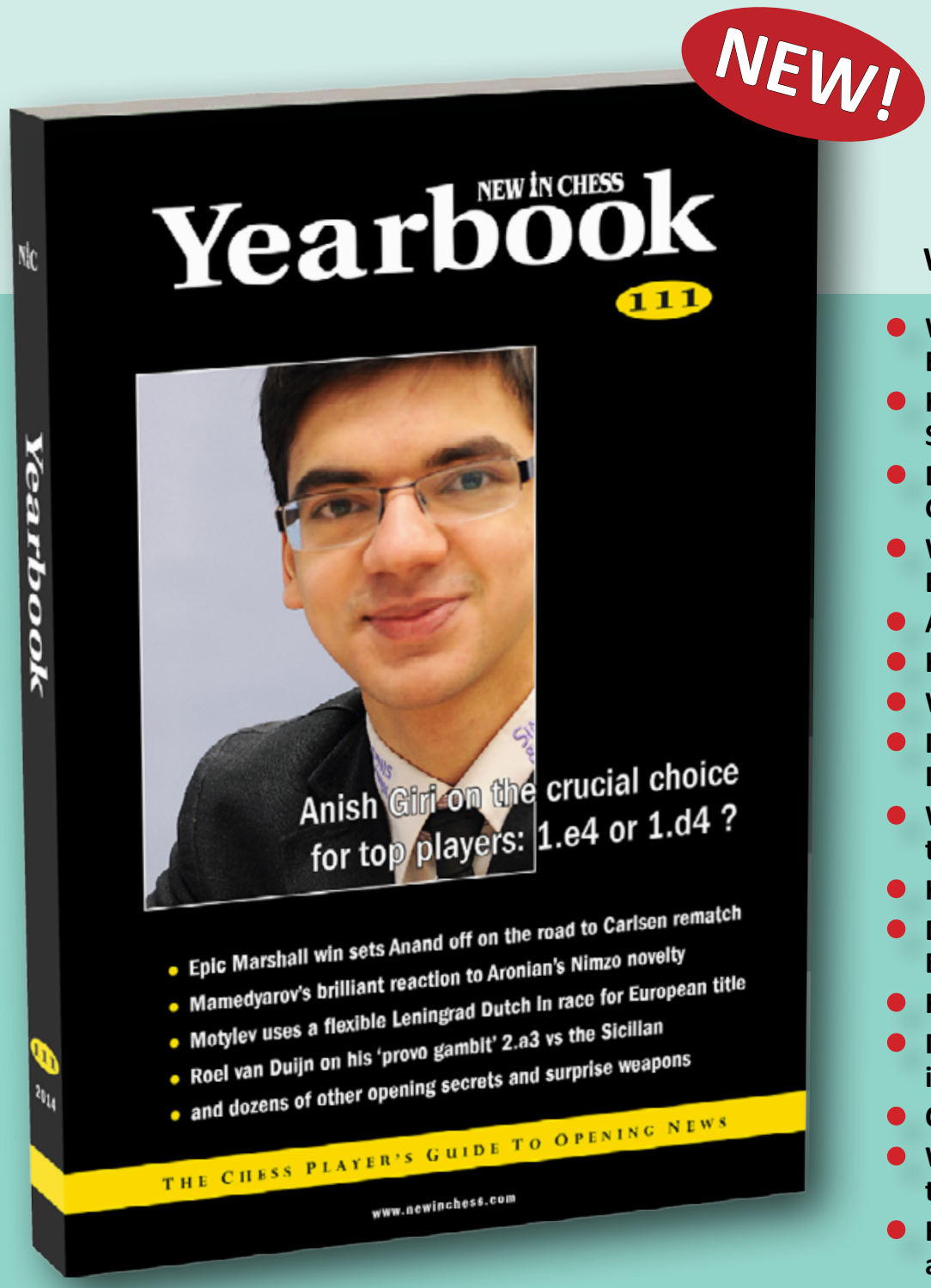
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COVER
Magnus Carlsen: New In Chess

'One thing I learned from reading books of the Dalai Lama is that in general it's better not to be angry.'

'There's not too much of a mystery to Carlsen. He plays good moves and that's why he wins games. Some people think it's about hypnosis. I don't really believe in that. I think it's possible to compete with him.' – *Fabiano Caruana*

Raising Awareness

As chess is believed to have originated as a war game, there has never been a lack of war associations. Tony Raymonzrek seems to have added a new dimension. With his Purling Couture Chess Set, the Lebanese-born artist hopes to raise awareness of the dangers of advanced military technology and modern warfare, more specifically chemical warfare. To begin with, the pieces are the colour of gold and oil, resources that are at the root of many armed conflicts. The players are wearing gas masks because there is a button that sets off smoke over the board. This is a last resort, a dirty bomb, which according to the artist will technically make you the winner of the game, but morally the loser. His question is what it will take for a player to decide that the only way out is to completely extinguish the enemy with a chemical attack. The set can be bought for £50,000 at Debut Contemporary, Notting Hill, London.

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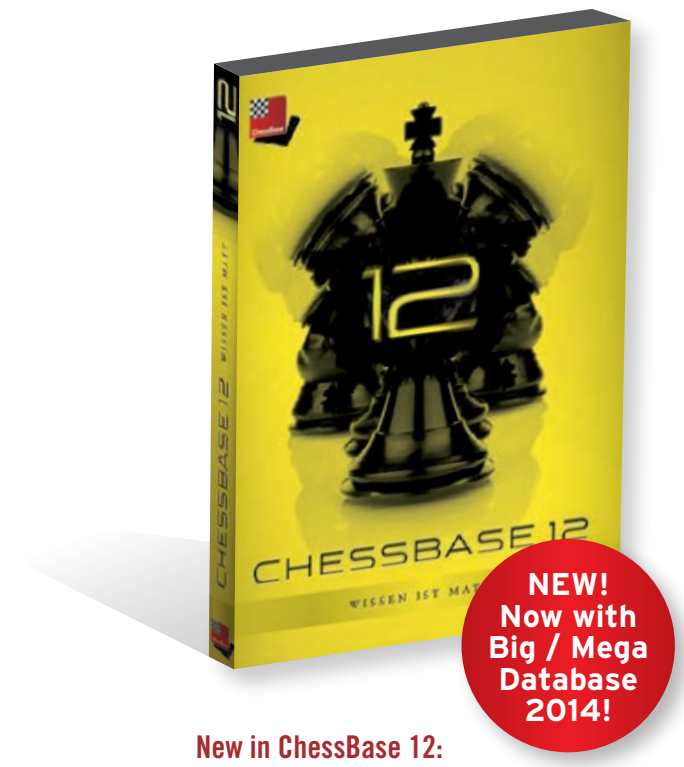

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Transparency

IGM Nigel Short's cogently presented case for transparency in FIDE's finances (cf. 'Agony' in New In Chess 2014/2) would carry more weight if he would use his undoubted influence to secure the open publication (for the first time, so I understand) of the detailed accounts, duly audited, of his 1993 match with IGM Garry Kasparov for the 'PCA' title, widely accepted as for the world championship, sponsored by *The Times* and held as a public event in the Savoy theatre in London's thoroughfare The Strand.

John Roycroft
London, United Kingdom

Nigel Short Stories

As you would notice in my subject heading, the middle word serves a dual purpose. Thus I am inspired by Nigel's short stories. I knew he was a good chess player but didn't realize that he is also a fine writer. He writes in a style that is pleasing to read.

David Erhabor
Lagos, Nigeria

Is chess a modern sport?

Some years ago, in New In Chess 2008/8, I shared my thoughts on the question whether chess is a sport. Now that the 2014 Candidates' Tournament in Khanty-Mansiysk has ended and the new challenger for World Champion Magnus Carlsen has been determined – former World Champion Vishy Anand – and now that it is unclear how much interest there is in this match, I find it hard to shrug off the question: is chess a modern sport?

This is not a question from yesterday, but nobody seems to be bothered by this question and I see no changes on the horizon…

Specifically it is all about the formula to determine the World Champion. The way it is now is only convenient and profitable for the champion plus a handful of personal managers and bureaucrats in FIDE.

Shouldn't we compare our system with the systems of commercially attractive sports, systems that are far more democratic, and wonder how they have been working? They have been working fine.

Let's look how things are done in the biggest sport of all, football. Spain is the current World and European Champion. The stars of the team play for the most powerful, rich and famous clubs in the world, such as Barcelona, Real Madrid, Chelsea. And all of them are millionaires, in case you need to be reminded. Yet, Spain have to defend their title starting from the first qualifying rounds, playing against teams like Liechtenstein, Malta. And once they qualify there is a preliminary group followed by the elimination phase that ultimately leads to the final.

It may be reasonable to ask why FIFA and UEFA like this format and FIDE and ECU don't. Because football is a team sport?

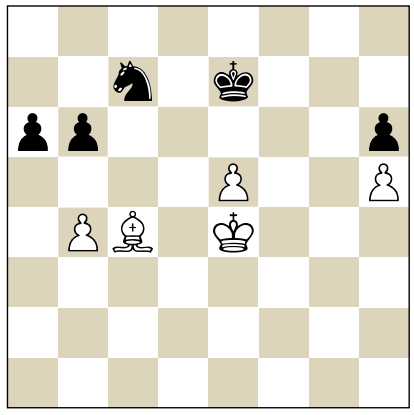
So what about Formula 1? Can you imagine having 11 Grand Prix races with all pilots except for Sebastian Vettel? And that these 11 events determine a challenger who confronts the champion in a 12th race? On a circuit selected by Sebastian. Why not? Nice! We should suggest this to Bernard Ecclestone & Co. Although they might question your sanity…

Simeon Stoichkov
Sofia, Bulgaria

Huge flaw

I am a subscriber of New In Chess and solve the six problems of *Beware: Brilliancy!* very diligently.

In New In Chess 2014/3, the 6th position has a huge flaw.



Zakhartsov-Estremera
Groningen 2013

It's true that after 51...a5 both 52.bxa5 and 52.b5 draw, but you haven't mentioned 52.♔f5!! axb4 53.♔g6 ♘e6 54.♔xh6, with a win for White.

I just wanted to bring it to your notice.

Sagar Shah
Mumbai, India

Postscript Yochanan Afek

I am afraid that the reader is right. Nevertheless I believe that my proposal was still the best practical chance as its refutation is not obvious.

Write to us

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Chess vs. Football

With the Football World Cup coming up soon, we should once again ask ourselves the eternal question: does it make sense to compare chess to football or vice versa? According to former German World Cup star Felix Magath, it does. In an interview with the *Daily Mail*, the Fulham manager said: 'Chess is like football. If the pieces, like the players, can work together, it becomes an effective team. That's what I am always looking for in football. The board is the field. It is the same strategy, and the same tactics. The good thing in chess is the fact that nothing is left to chance. There is no unfortunate bounce of the ball, or a poor refereeing decision. In chess there is no outside influence. There is more purity but, still, the two games are similar.'

Hamburg 1985. Felix Magath in a simul against Garry Kasparov (1-0, 34).

Chess vs. Synchrotron

ChipChick.com, the women's lifestyle and technology site not only brings you news about consumer electronics and quirky gadgets, but also has a special section called 'Geek Culture'. And you guessed right, geeks are cool. A recent article, posted during the U.S. Championships in St. Louis, was entitled 'Date a Geek' and featured Iryna Zenyuk. Iryna was born in Ukraine, grew up in New York and now lives in Berkeley, California, where she works as a chemist postdoctorate fellow, trying to make fuel cell technologies more efficient.

Asked what makes her a geek, 27-year-old Zenyuk answered: 'My obsession with solving hard problems. Chess is an activity where you have to make decision after decision when the clock is ticking, solving one problem after another. This fascinated me as a kid and by age seven, I had already travelled to many different regional and national championships and became quite good at it. My obsession with chess really kicked in during my teenage years, when I had access to a world-famous chess club in New York, spending endless hours studying and playing chess, which propelled me to move up in the rankings from the country's top-100 to the top-10. Now I am more passionate about science, but the skills set is basically the same. Give me a 24-hour shift at synchrotron, and I would not trade it for any other activity.'

We love that last sentence. In St. Louis, Zenyuk finished shared fifth with 4 out of 9. She drew her games with champion

Iryna Zenyuk: a further plea for geeks.

Irina Krush and the other two players involved in the tiebreak, Anna Zatonskih and Tatev Abrahamyan.

Orange juice vs. Red Bull

The first time we heard about it was in 1998, when Dimitri Reinderman won the second group in Wijk aan Zee with a 2764 performance (find out more about him in this issue's 'Just Checking'). As a possible explanation for his tremendous result, Reinderman mentioned Red Bull, an energy drink containing lots of caffeine. The Dutchman had been drinking it at two tournaments and immediately scored his second and third GM norms. As he put it: 'I don't know if it is of any real help, but so far I have no proof of the contrary.' Perhaps it was this lack of certainty that kept Red Bull from becoming the chess player's drink overnight, but who knows what will happen now that Red Bull has signed up Hikaru Nakamura to promote its positive effects.

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Hikaru Nakamura gulps down a can of Red Bull before he takes on Magnus Carlsen.

In Shamkir, the American number one would arrive at the board with a can of Red Bull and quickly gulp it down as if he was drinking a magic potion that needed a couple of minutes before it started working. Of course, you shouldn't draw conclusions after only one tournament, but Nakamura's choice did make us think about the beverages that chess players prefer during their games. Traditionally, it has always been lots of coffee, tea, water and coke, and this is still very much the case. But there are exceptions. Boris Gelfand has been known to rely on Isostar, an isotonic sports drink, and Magnus Carlsen doesn't turn up without a plastic bottle filled with orange juice. At one of the press conferences in Shamkir, the World Champion was even more specific: it contained orange juice that was slightly diluted with water. And, as if he wanted to stress that it was not such a bad recipe, he added that it had been like that for quite some years already.

A great tradition

For the moment we are left guessing where the match between World Champion Magnus Carlsen and Vishy Anand will be staged. When the extended deadline expired on April 30th, FIDE announced that no bids had been received. The months ahead will show whether there is really no interest in this match or whether it has become part of the political fight around the FIDE presidential elections in August.

Still, it's tempting to think that a sponsor would have been found very quickly if one of the players had been Russian. Norway may be enjoying a chess boom, but Russia remains the number one chess nation in the world. We were once again reminded of the great chess tradition that the country still cherishes, when on May 23rd, the Mark Taimanov Chess School was opened in the heart of St. Petersburg. At the centre of attention was the 88-year-old maestro himself. Taimanov called St. Petersburg the cradle of the Soviet chess school and said that all his life he had been hoping to open a school where children could feel at home and get a proper chess

Mark Taimanov (88) at the opening of his chess school in St. Petersburg.

education. After all, that's how his own chess career started, when way back in 1937(!), he followed the lessons of Mikhail Botvinnik at the Pioneers' Palace as a kid.

The importance of the festive opening was illustrated by the number of prominent guests. To name just a few: Andrei Filatov, President of the Russian Chess Federation, multibillionaire Gennady Timchenko, Vladimir Kramnik and Alexander Zhukov, Deputy Prime Minister of the Russian Federation and Head of the Russian Olympic Committee.

Kiwi-spotting in Norway

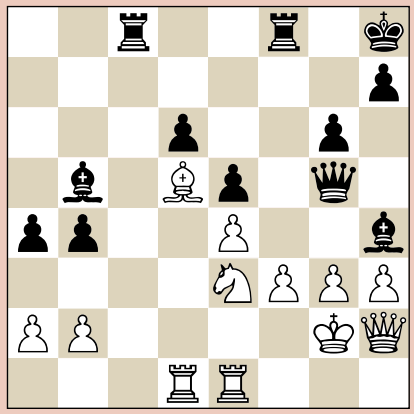
If there is one event that perfectly represents the FIDE motto of Gens Una Sumus, it is the Olympiad, that wonderful biennial gathering of chess players from all over the world. Therefore it came as quite a shock when, only two and a half months before the start of the Tromsø Olympiad, the organizers announced that they were facing serious financial problems. The Norwegian government had rejected a request for further financial support, and this left a gap in the budget of close to two million euro. How this could happen is a long story with various parties pointing accusing fingers at each other. The most diplomatic explanation was provided by the President of the Norwegian Chess Federation, Jøran Aulin-Jansson, when he gave a presentation to the Committee of Finance in the Norwegian parliament, explaining why the Olympiad needs extra financial support of 15 million Norwegian Kroner, which is roughly 1.85 million euro or 2.5 million U.S. dollars. He argued that since the day the budget was set seven years ago there had been various developments (from changing exchange rates to a much higher number of participating countries than expected), and none of them had been in their favour.

FIDE added to the pressure by stating that a possible cancellation of the Olympiad would seriously damage the reputation of the Norwegian Chess Federation and Norway as a country. And made sure to mention Norway's aspirations to have the Winter Games in 2022.

Let's hope that a solution will be found; you don't want to cancel an Olympiad. It is there that you not only see all the stars gathered together, but

Puchen Wang: brilliant finish.

also dozens and dozens of players that you rarely get a chance to see. Let's give just one example: we're looking forward to seeing Puchen Wang in action! Have a look at the brilliant way the 24-year-old New Zealand champion recently crowned a game and you'll understand why.

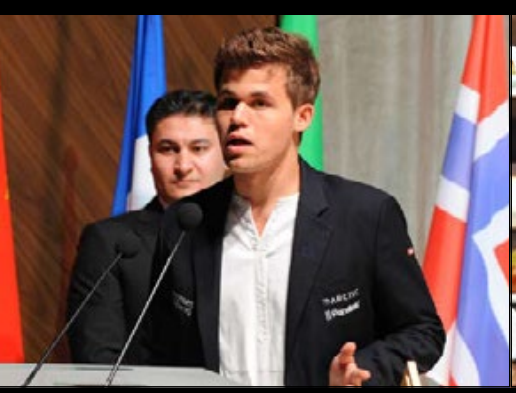


Hans Gao – Puchen Wang
Auckland 2013
position after 28.♗d5

28...♗f1+!! Not the computer's first move, but it works brilliantly. **29.♔f2** What else? The knight cannot take because of 29...♖c2+, and after 29.♖xf1 ♕xe3 White will soon collapse. **29...♖xf3+** The intended follow-up. **30.♔xf3 ♖f8+ 31.♘f5 ♖xf5+ 32.exf5 ♕xf5+** and White resigned, not waiting for 33.♔e3 ♗g5 mate. ■

Shamkir Royal

World Champion triumphs in grand tribute to Vugar Gashimov



On behalf of the players first-prize winner Magnus Carlsen thanked the organizers for the magnificent reception they had had.

No expenses or efforts were spared in staging a grandiose international chess tournament to the memory of Vugar Gashimov only three months after his tragic death at the age of 27. Organized in record time and lavishly sponsored by Synergy, one of the largest private investment holdings in Azerbaijan, Shamkir 2014 exceeded all expectations. The main act was a six-player double round-robin with four top-10 guests and the strongest Azeri players. The fight for first place took a dramatic turn when Magnus Carlsen sensationally lost two games in a row. The Norwegian rallied and crowned his efforts with a last-round win worthy of a World Champion against closest rival Fabiano Caruana. **Dirk Jan ten Geuzendam** reports from Shamkir, a small town some 400 kilometres from the capital Baku that hopes to become a household name in the world of chess.

PHOTOS: NEW IN CHESS

The facade of the Heydar Aliyev Congress Centre with a huge banner commemorating Vugar Gashimov.

The day after Shamkir 2014 has come to an end, the players and an assorted group of officials and journalists return to Baku, from where they will go their separate ways. We take a domestic flight from the small airport of Gance, the third biggest city of Azerbaijan, half an hour's drive from Shamkir. When we arrive at the hyper-modern Heydar Aliyev Airport in Baku less than an hour later, we collect our luggage and the farewells that end every chess tournament begin. For a moment I am reluctant to bother Sarkhan Gashimov. Together with the representatives of Synergy, Sarkhan has been working on his brother's tournament day and night for the past months. Now there are many people for him to take leave of. My brief worries are taken away when he sees me and repeats what he told me weeks ago: 'I can come to your hotel and show you Baku. And we can go to Vugar.'

It's a fitting end to a tournament that may become a tradition to honour the memory of a great player and a fine human being. In the early evening, Sarkhan picks me up. We are joined by Peter Heine Nielsen, who played Vugar on a couple of occasions, their most memorable clash undoubtedly being at the 2011 World Cup. They exchanged blows tirelessly, alternating wins and shunning draws. Only after six decisive games did Gashimov proceed to the next round.

When we reach Vugar's grave, it's getting dark and a chilly wind is blowing. The most striking part of the grave is a huge monument, a marble wall with portraits and Vugar's biggest successes. At the heart of the wall is a huge chess diagram with the position after 70 moves of his game against Daniel Stellwagen from the match Azerbaijan-the Netherlands at the European Team Championship in Novi Sad in 2009. Underneath is the brilliant king move with which Vugar decided that game and brought Azerbaijan the European title.

In front of the marble wall is Vugar's tomb. On top of it a poem is carved, written by his mother, heart-rending

The monument at the grave of Vugar Gashimov with at the heart the key position from his game against Daniel Stellwagen at the 2009 European Team Championship.

NEW IN CHESS

lines describing how she failed to protect her darling and had to let him go. His mother, often accompanied by his father, comes here every day, to water the flowers and sit on the small bench that is part of the monument.

It was here that the players were taken when they arrived in Baku the day before the opening ceremony of Shamkir 2014. Unforgettable was the speech by Vugar's father Kasum, the former army colonel who taught both his sons to play chess and was their first trainer. In 2008, Kasum went to Hajj in Mecca and ever since he has tried to live by his religion as faithfully as possible, but the absence of his son is unbearable. When Vugar died, Kasum stopped shaving and grew a beard as a token of his mourning.

On their arrival in Shamkir, it didn't take long for the players to realize that they were going to be treated like stars. In the Excelsior Hotel they all had three rooms: one for themselves, one for their second, and one in-between to work on their chess. For Magnus Carlsen a spacious suite of some 120 square metres was waiting. Everything else was top-notch too, from the brand-new venue to the party on the free day with a performance of Sabina Babayeva, who represented Azerbaijan at the Eurovision Song Festival in Baku two years ago. As Fahriyar Jabbarov, tournament director and deputy of the Supervisory Board of the Synergy Group, simply put it: 'The aim was to hold it at the highest level.' The main reason to hold the tournament was the sudden death of Vugar Gashimov, but they already had plans to stage a chess event: 'Synergy is very active in corporate social responsibility, and we support other sports as well, like cycling.' Jabbarov didn't want to reveal what the budget had been, but when prodded he broke into a broad smile saying: 'It was higher than we had initially expected. To be honest, we spent too much money. If we hold it next year, we should also think about commercializing the tournament.'

'To be honest, we spent too much money. If we hold it next year, we should also think about commercializing the tournament.'

The absolute star of Shamkir 2014 was Magnus Carlsen, who... almost didn't make it to Azerbaijan. Arriving from Oman, where he had had a training session, he was not allowed to board the plane for Baku in Dubai. For some reason he was not on the passenger list. Unruffled, the World Champion called Fahriyar Jabbarov, explained the problem and soon found out how efficiently the Synergy people could pull strings. But although they managed to get him on the plane, they couldn't prevent his luggage from getting lost. Again Carlsen had no real reason to worry. In Baku he was taken to do some shopping, and he even got a new haircut.

Carlsen was eager and got off to a flashy start with wins over Mamedyarov and Nakamura. In the third round he seemed to be heading for another win, but he failed to convert a favourable endgame against Karjakin. For Carlsen this was a spanner in the works, while for Karjakin it was his third draw in the tournament and his ninth draw in a row, as he had also drawn his final six games at the Russian Team Championship. And there was more to come. Round by round the tension grew about whether Karjakin was going to draw all his games. In the end he did, achieving a drawing streak of 16 games in all. Karjakin understood that this result caused hilarity but tried to dispel the suggestion that he had been in a peaceful mood: 'I cannot be completely satisfied because you want to win sometimes, but I was fighting in every game.' He also pointed out that it had been his third tournament on the trot, but that he had had no choice but to accept the invitation for Shamkir, as Vugar Gashimov was his best friend.

Just like the Zurich Chess Challenge, the tournament in Shamkir was broadcast live on Norwegian television. What's more, there had been a fight between two channels to acquire the rights for the live transmission, which was won by TV2. The first

rounds must have gotten the Norwegian viewers in a good mood, but then there followed an intermezzo that they are not quite used to, when Carlsen suddenly lost two games in a row.

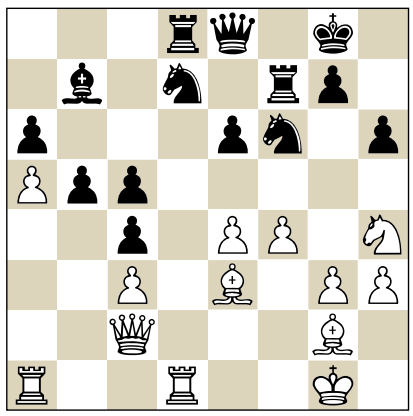
The first one to beat him was not an unfamiliar face, as Fabiano Caruana has beaten him before – and intends doing so again if we go by his comments at the press conference after he had torn down the Norwegian's Berlin Wall with precise and pointed play: 'There isn't too much of a mystery to Carlsen. He plays good moves and that's why he wins games. Some people think it's about hypnosis. I don't really believe in that... I think it's possible to compete with him... You just have to approach it like any other game. You should just play the best moves, and if you play well, you shouldn't lose.'

The next day saw another blow for Carlsen and a big boost for the local chess fans. Spoiling for a fight, the World Champion picked up the gauntlet when Teimour Radjabov played his pet King's Indian and steered for a full-blooded battle. A great game it was, but while Carlsen failed to get a full grip on the secrets of the position, Radjabov rose to the occasion and scored a well-deserved win.

Radjabov, who has been working hard on a comeback after his disastrous result in the London Candidates' last year, was generally pleased with his result in Shamkir, but nothing could compare with his win against Carlsen, of course: 'That was the best day in the tournament for sure, and maybe the best day in, like, the last one and a half years. He rarely loses. Here he lost to Caruana too, but I was Black and I am not sure when will be the next time he loses with White. It was a win against the World Champion, the player who is showing the best results at the moment, way ahead of the other players. And it was a King's Indian, the opening of my life.'

In three days Carlsen had lost 15 rating points and a tournament that had looked decided after a mere two rounds, was suddenly completely open again. Radjabov was leading, one point ahead of his compatriot Mamedyarov, who was in bottom place, and half a point ahead of a quartet that included Carlsen.

On the free day, the tournament favourite let off steam by playing football, and the following day Shakhriyar Mamedyarov lent a helping hand by aiming for a sharp struggle with an early pawn sacrifice. A draw seemed in the making when the Azeri lost control.



Mamedyarov-Carlsen
position after 20... ♖f7

White has enough compensation for the pawn and Carlsen expected the game to end in a draw. With 21.♖ab1 White could have kept his grip on the position. Instead, Mamedyarov opts for a seemingly aggressive move. **21.♖d6 e5!** Very strong. One of the points is that the pawn on e4 becomes a liability. **22.f5 ♘f8 23.♗xc5 ♖xd6 24.♗xd6 ♖d7** Suddenly White is in deep trouble. **25.♗xf8 ♕xf8** The white position rapidly collapses. **26.♖d1 ♕c5+ 27.♔h2 ♗xe4!** White resigned.

Mamedyarov could only shake his head in disbelief. How could he play so poorly, he seemed to be asking himself. At the press conference he illustrated his disbelief with a story that had everyone laughing. He compared his oversights in this game to the win he had missed in his game against Karjakin in the match Azerbaijan vs. The World in Baku in 2009. A win that everyone had seen, except for him. As he left the playing hall, grandmasters approached him, asking why he had not played Rook b6. Fans, spectators, no one could under-

Kasum Gashimov, who taught both his sons to play chess, followed the games in one of the front rows, mostly together with one of his grandchildren.

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stand why he had not played Rook b6. It would have won easily! But it only dawned on him how terrible his oversight had been when he left the building and even a gardener asked him: 'Why didn't you play Rook b6?'

Still, even more painful than Mamedyarov's disbelief must have been what Hikaru Nakamura felt when, the next day, he once again lost against Magnus Carlsen, despite the can of Red Bull, his new sponsor, that he ostentatiously downed before the game. This time he didn't lose from a totally winning position as in Zurich, but certainly from a position in which he was entitled to cherish hopes to beat his nemesis. But instead of inflicting that coveted defeat, he got all confused and was comprehensively outplayed.

With this win Carlsen increased his classical score against Nakamura, draws not counting, to 10-0, a round figure that escaped few observers. Nakamura, for his part, reacted remarkably relaxed: 'Most of those games that I lost were not in the recent past. Most of them were three, four, five years ago. I don't remember all of them, but the one thing I am happy about is that I got two winning positions against him, in Zurich definitely and here I was significantly better. That's definitely a step in the right direction. Magnus is one opponent and in a tournament you also have to beat the other players. I am not too concerned about the individual results, I just have to keep doing what I am doing, only a bit better.'

'Hikaru Nakamura once again lost against Magnus Carlsen, despite the can of Red Bull, his new sponsor, that he ostentatiously downed before the game.'

In fact, his worries were not about the Carlsen games, but the 'weirdness' of his performance. 'It seemed as if I was either out-prepared or completely surprised one way or another in every single game. With the exception of the second game against Carlsen, I can't think of any other game where I deserved to be better. I know I won both games against Mamedyarov, but I certainly was not better in either of those games. That being said, an even score is pretty decent.'

While Carlsen had to settle for draws against Karjakin and Radjabov in Rounds 8 and 9, Caruana showed his eagerness to compete with the World Champion by beating Radjabov and Mamedyarov and catching up with the leader. And, as if they were following a carefully scripted scenario, Carlsen and Caruana were paired against each other on the final day. Carlsen only needed a draw, as the first tiebreaker, the highest number of wins, favoured him, an unpleasant detail for the Italian, who had Black – a difficult and perhaps confusing position to be in. As it was, he never came close to threatening Carlsen a second time. The Norwegian wasn't too thrilled about the level of his last game, but Garry Kasparov was not the only one to be impressed by his win, as he told the world in the following tweet: 'Congratulations to Magnus Carlsen for his big win in Shamkir today! Winning the final game to show a World Champion's class and heart.'

Looking back, Caruana was relatively pleased with his play in Shamkir, but understandably disappointed about the last round: 'It wasn't clear what I was playing for and that is usually a bad sign. Whether I wanted to make a draw or whether I wanted to win. From the opening I should have played more solidly. I sacrificed a pawn for no reason. I got a bad position and I managed to find some chances. At some point I thought I had pretty reasonable play. If I hadn't played ...f5, I would have been able to create some counter-chances. But after I played ...f5 he was very accurate.'

But he continues to believe that Carlsen can be challenged: 'I mean, I don't approach him like an impossible challenge. I think it's possible to outplay him. I try to beat him. He makes mistakes, he's just a human. He makes fewer mistakes, but he makes them and we saw here that he is vulnerable.'

The tense clash between Carlsen and Caruana was the worthy climax of a remarkable tournament. Whether there will be a second edition remains as yet unclear, but in any case this one will not be forgotten. Those who were in Shamkir will cherish it as a special memory. As Sarkhan Gashimov put it: 'It is great that we had this tournament, it is incredibly sad that it was a memorial for Vugar.'

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Sarkhan Gashimov: 'It is great that we had this tournament, it is incredibly sad that it was a memorial for Vugar.'

NOTES BY
Peter Heine Nielsen

QO 15.7 – D52
Magnus Carlsen
Shakhriyar Mamedyarov
Shamkir 2014 (1)

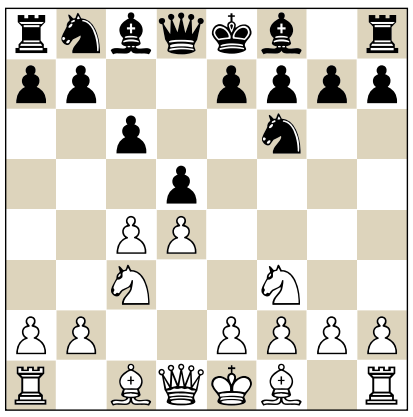
The saddest of reasons brought together the strongest chess festival ever in Azerbaijan. A touching ceremony at Vugar's grave in Baku before we travelled on to Shamkir, and posters of the happy smiling Vugar that we all knew and who will be sorely missed, set the tune for a memorable memorial. And what better way to honour a friend than by playing good and interesting fighting chess in his style?

1.d4 d5

Quite a surprise. Mamedyarov used to play the Grünfeld, and for the Candidates' tournament he obviously also had prepared 1...♘f6 2...e6 quite well. But that in the short time since then he had managed to even prepare the Slav came quite unexpected. But then, with Alexey Dreev on the spot as his second, it was not exactly unpredictable.

2.c4 c6 3.♘f3 ♘f6 4.♘c3!?

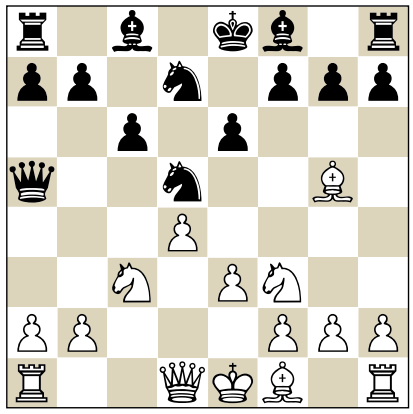
Magnus has been very successful with 4.e3, and indeed he was again in the next round against Nakamura, but here he goes for the more principled main lines.



4...e6 5.♗g5 ♘bd7

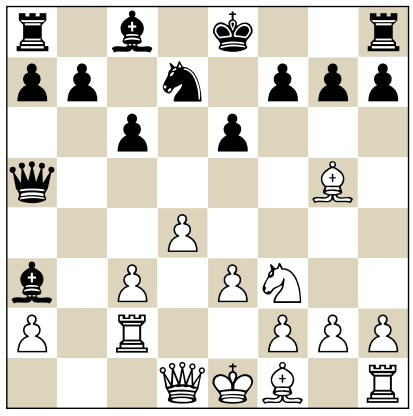
Mamedyarov follows in Dreev's footsteps and heads for the Cambridge Springs.

6.e3 ♕a5 7.cxd5 ♘xd5



8.♖c1!? Again the most principled move. This pawn sacrifice, introduced by Kramnik, has recently become the main line. It was seen as promising till the game Gelfand-Carlsen from last year's Candidates', where Magnus won a very nice positional game.

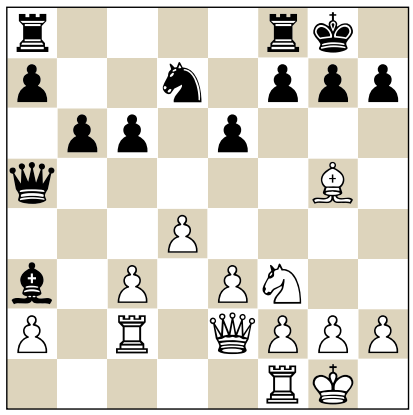
8...♘xc3 9.bxc3 ♗a3 10.♖c2



10...b6!? Mamedyarov still follows Carlsen's example, although it is very likely that he was more inspired by Dreev, who has played this a number of times recently.

11.♗e2!? Gelfand put his bishop on d3, and although he got a decent position, White's play was later refined, and it turns out that the white queen is moderately better placed on e2.

11...♗a6 12.0-0 ♗xe2 13.♕xe2 0-0

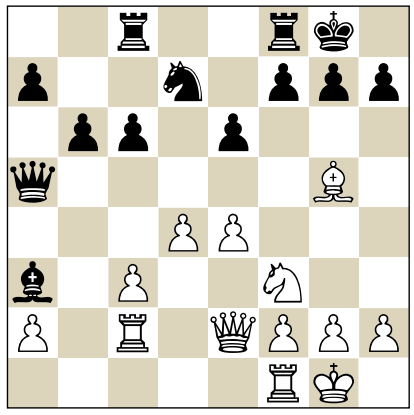


14.e4!? Over-the-board inspiration and deviating from the 14.♖d1 played by my wife(!) against Dreev(!). That might have indicated that some preparation battle was going on, but from the time-consumption of the players it was clear that Magnus was giving the position a fresh look. He comes up with something that looks indeed very logical and turns out to be an interesting novelty.

14.♖d1 ♖fe8 15.e4 ♖ac8 16.♗f4 c5 17.♘d2 was pleasant for White in Cmilyte-Dreev, Gibraltar 2014, so most likely Mamedyarov and Dreev had an improvement ready here.

14...♖ac8?!

Probably inaccurate, as Black's counterplay on the c-file is actually slowed down despite Black putting his rook there. Better was 14...♖fe8!?, when, after 15.e5, Black sets the counterplay in motion with 15...c5!, when 16.♘d2 is met by 16...b5, with a roughly equal and complex game ahead.



15.e5!

In the afore-mentioned game Gelfand-Carlsen from last year, the Norwegian made it look as if Gelfand's e5 was almost a strategical mistake, while in this game it looks like the winning concept! There are definitely small details in White's favour here, but it's mainly about seeing the positive things in the position, as well as executing them very well.

15...♕a4

Here 15...c5 does not work, as 16.d5! exd5 17.e6! wins tactically for White. But maybe 15...b5!? was better. At least it would have avoided White's next move.

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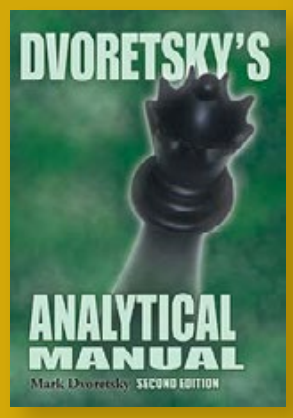

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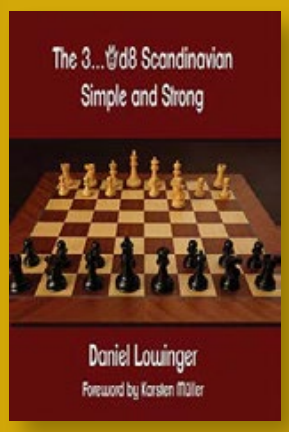

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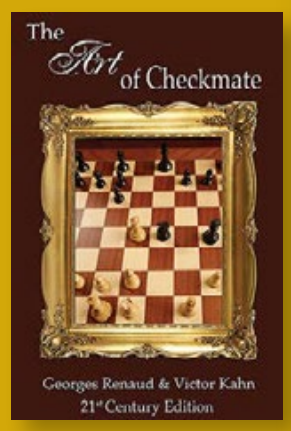

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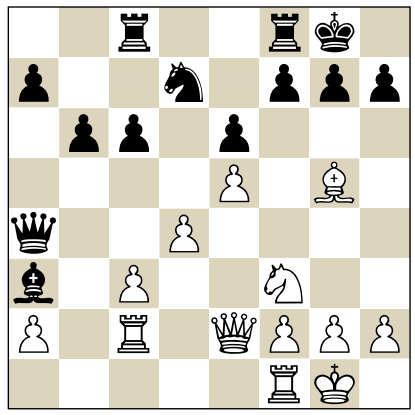
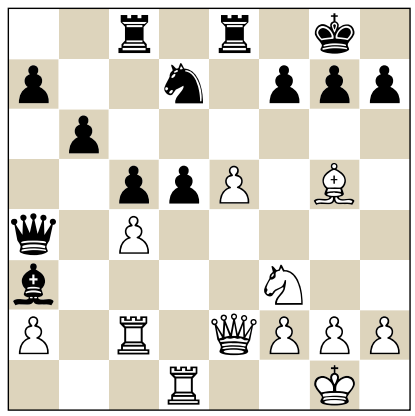
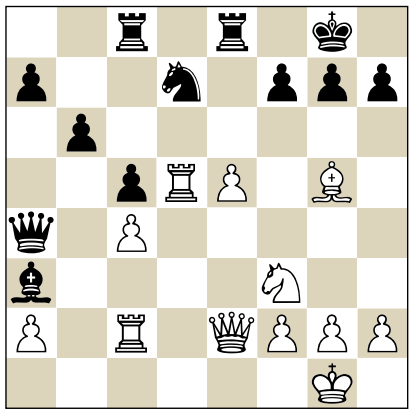


16.c4!?
Now suddenly Mamedyarov is close to being in huge trouble strategically. White has a broad centre and the undermining ...c5 can now be met by d5!, with a dominating central force.
16...♖fe8 17.♖d1 c5!?
Taking the bull by the horns and provoking an immediate crisis.
More cautious would have been to go 17...♗f8 first, but Shakhriyar wants to exploit the pin on the e-file and doesn't want to give Carlsen a second chance.
18.d5! exd5



19.♖xd5
The pawn sacrifice 19.cxd5!? was probably objectively better. Magnus didn't see a clear win and went for the game continuation. Indeed, Black keeps defending after 19...♘xe5 20.♘xe5 ♖xe5 21.♕xe5 ♕xc2 22.♖e1!. Due to the threat of 23.♕e8+ and the back-rank mate, White wins an important tempo, but Black is able to stop the white d-pawn just in time: 22...♖f8! (else the white d-pawn will cost Black the exchange) 23.♗e7 ♖e8 24.d6 ♕a4 25.♕d5 ♕d7, when despite White's obvious initiative (and e.g. 26.♖e3 ♗b2 27.♖f3 ♗f6 28.h3, followed by taking on f6, will get the pawn back), Black will be likely to save the draw.

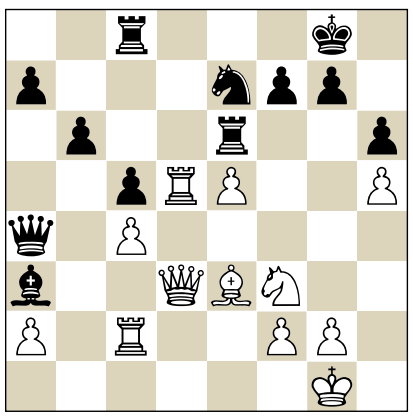


19...♘f8? One would almost say that Mamedyarov plays uncharacteristically solid common sense chess and brings the knight closer to the defence of his king.
But more direct counterplay was called for. After 19...♘b8!? it is not easy to see a clear way forward for White: 20.♕e4!? looks promising, as after 20...h6? 21.♗xh6 gxh6 22.♘h4 he has a huge attack, but 20...♘c6 is logical and strong

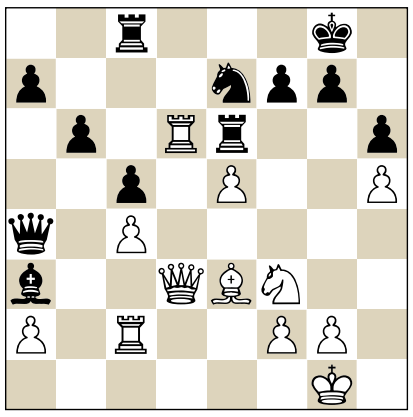
ANALYSIS DIAGRAM

and although 21.♗f6 looks close to winning (as 21...gxf6? 22.♕g4+ ♔h8 23.exf6 ♖g8 24.♘g5! is a decisive attack), the simple 21...♘d4! holds the balance for Black, as after 22.♕g4 both 22...g6 and 22...♘e6 are OK. These lines probably scared Mamedyarov, and his kingside does look vulnerable. Still, as there seems to be no very efficient way to exploit this, he could have created counterchances, whereas now he just slips into a bad and passive position.

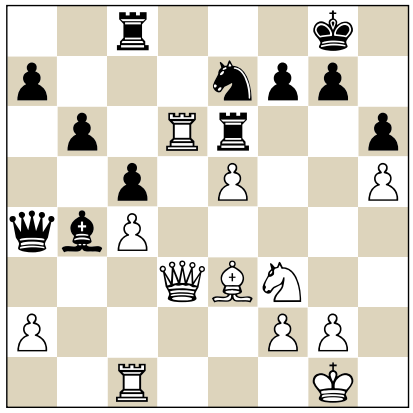
20.h4 h6 Weakening the kingside, but getting e7 for the knight.
21.♗e3 ♘g6 22.♕d3
Things are starting to clarify and due to Black's mistake at move 19, White is better. Black's main problem is that the bishop on a3 is out of play, with no reasonable way of getting back.
22...♖e6 23.h5 ♘e7



24.♖d6!?
Just like one could argue with 19. ♖xd5, Magnus goes for a very 'human' approach and chooses quiet domination over a very concrete line. The computer prefers 24.♖d8+ ♖xd8 25.♕xd8+ ♔h7 26.♖d2!, when ♖d7 next looks like a threat that cannot be parried. But Black holds on with 26...♗c1! 27.♖d7 ♗xe3 28.fxe3 ♕xa2!, when after 29.♖xe7 ♖xe7 30.♕xe7 ♕xc4 31.♕xa7 b5 the black b-pawn is hard to stop and Black has, at least practically speaking, serious drawing chances.



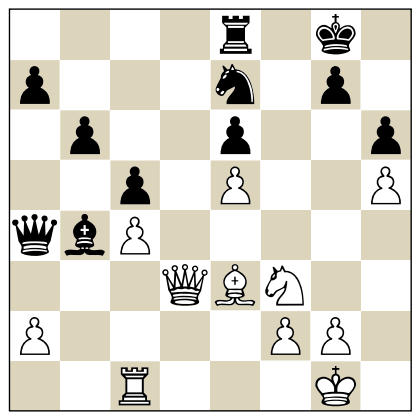
24...♗b4
Here 24...♘c6 is the first move indicated by the computers, the point being 25.♖xe6 ♘b4!?. This seems to create counterplay just in time, but White has the beautiful 26.♕f5! ♕xc2, and now, amazingly, 27.♕g4! ♕d1+ 28.♔h2 ♕d7 29.♗xh6! fxe6 30.♗xg7 leaves Black defenceless, as the only way to avoid immediate disaster is 30...♕xg7, but then 31.♕xe6+, followed by ♕xc8, is a decisive attack, since the black pieces are too far away from the king.
25.♖c1



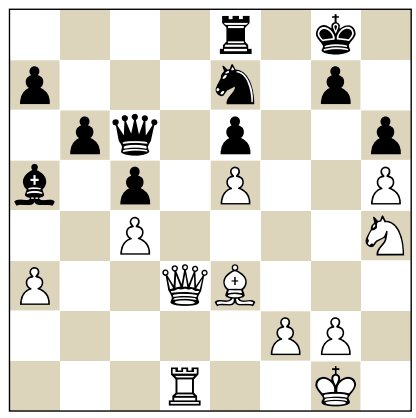
25...♖e8
Threatening ...♘c6, when suddenly Black would be back in business. But of course Magnus takes on e6 first.
26.♖xe6 fxe6 Now Black's structure is seriously weakened. And with his next move, Carlsen puts his finger on the weakest spot.

NEW IN CHESS

Magnus Carlsen arrived in Shamkir from a training session in Oman. Eager to do well, the World Champion started off with an impressive win against Shakhriyar Mamedyarov.

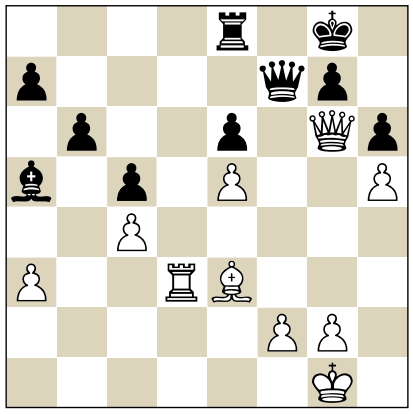


27.♘h4! ♕c6 28.a3 ♗a5 29.♖d1
Black's position is just lost. The bishop on a5 is completely sidetracked and the rest of the army only has defensive roles. On the other hand, all White's pieces have more positive possibilities.

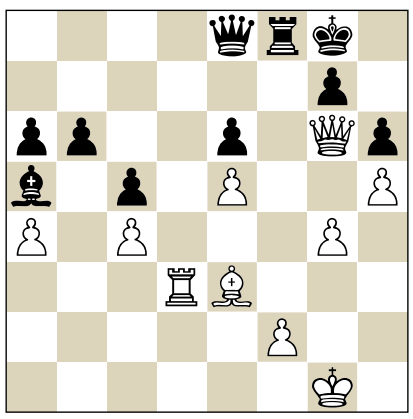


Not only the same smile. You're right, that's Shakhriyar Mamedyarov together with his father.

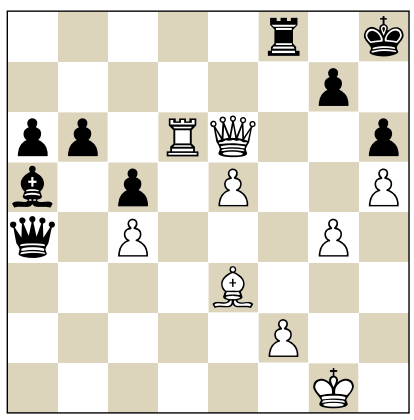
29...♕c7 30.♘g6 ♘xg6 31.♕xg6 ♕f7 32.♖d3!
White has no reason to fear the endgame. Putting it mathematically: the more pieces are exchanged, the bigger becomes the percentage of misplaced black pieces on a5!



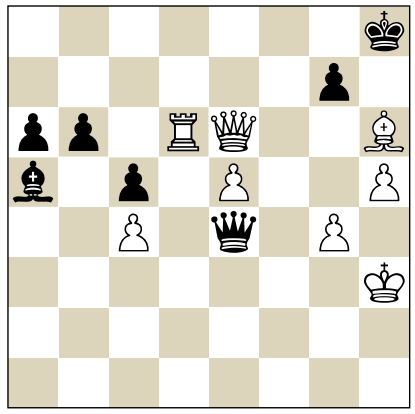
32...a6 33.a4
Of course not allowing ...b5, which would let the bishop back into play.
33...♖f8 34.g4 ♕e8



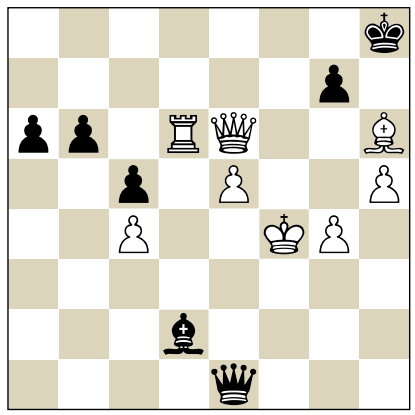
35.♖d6!? A bold decision, as 35.♕xe8, followed by f4 and a king march to e4, was certainly also enough to win. But there is nothing wrong with Magnus's approach. It just requires very exact calculation.
35...♕xa4!?
Mamedyarov goes for his chance. Obviously, passive defending would not save him.
36.♕xe6+ ♔h8



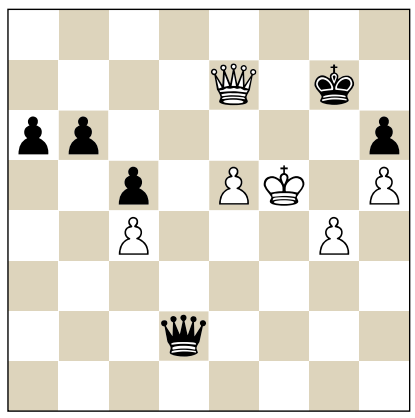
37.♗xh6!
As on move 37, there were safer ways.
37...♕a1+ 38.♔g2 ♖xf2+ 39.♔xf2 ♕e1+ 40.♔g2 ♕e4+ 41.♔h3!
This is the point. In exactly this position it seems strange that the white way to safety is via h4, as now it would be met by ...♗e1+. But the black queen would have to leave e4 in order to give check and this would open a path via either h4 or f4, when the king breaks free via g5-g6.



41...♕h1+ 41...♕f3+ 42.♔h4 ♗e1+ 43.♔g5 leads nowhere either.
42.♔g3 ♕e1+ 43.♔f4 ♗d2+!?
A final trick, as now 44.♔f5?? would allow 44...♕b1+!, and mate.



44.♖xd2! ♕xd2+ 45.♔f5 The material balance has been restored, but the white pawns will queen first. **45...gxh6 46.♕e8+ ♔g7 47.♕e7+**

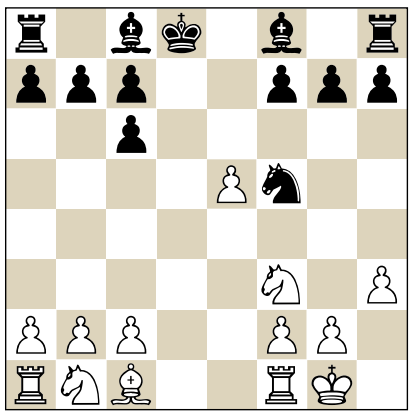


And Mamedyarov resigned, as after 47...♔g8 48.♔g6!, followed by ♔xh6 and then g5, stops all the checks.
An excellent start for Magnus, not only because of the full point, but also in terms of the quality of his play. For 2½ rounds it looked as if everything was in control. But then things took a dramatic turn and what looked like 3/3 became 2½/5!

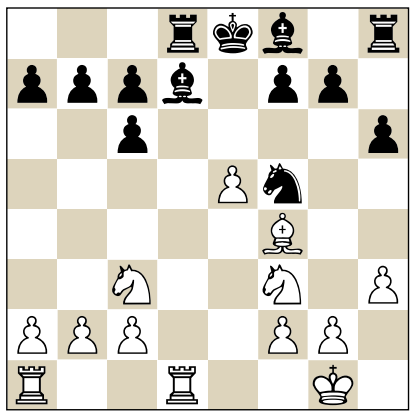
NOTES BY
Fabiano Caruana

RL 7.4 – C67
Fabiano Caruana
Magnus Carlsen
Shamkir 2014 (4)

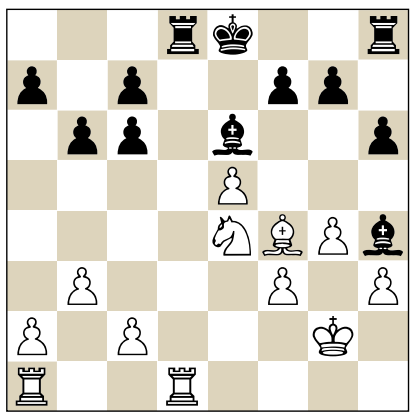
1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.♗b5 ♘f6 4.0-0 ♘xe4 5.d4 ♘d6 6.♗xc6 dxc6 7.dxe5 ♘f5 8.♕xd8+ ♔xd8 9.h3



9...h6
In the World Championship match, Magnus played 9...♗d7. Perhaps he feared preparation and was hoping to surprise me, but he made an unfortunate choice, going for a line I knew well, as I had faced it last year against Ponomariov.
The fourth match game in Chennai saw 9...♗d7 10.♖d1 ♗e7 11.♘c3 (it's interesting that exactly one day before the Anand-Carlsen game, Grischuk played the same variation against me during the European Team Championship. I played 11.g4 and the game was eventually drawn) 11...♔c8 12.♗g5 h6 13.♗xe7 ♘xe7 14.♖d2 c5 15.♖ad1 ♗e6 16.♘e1 ♘g6 17.♘d3 b6 18.♘e2, and now Magnus grabbed a pawn with 18...♗xa2!, held onto it and nearly won the game. (New In Chess 2013/8 pp. 19-24 – ed.)
10.♖d1+
Now Black's king is forced to e8, which generally speaking is an awkward square.
10...♔e8 11.♘c3 ♗d7 12.♗f4 ♖d8

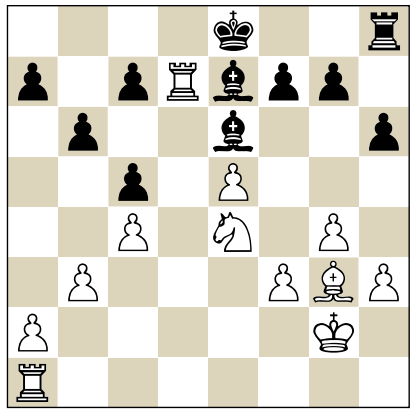


13.♘e4
This is the new move. In the aforementioned game against Ponomariov, I played 13.e6 and didn't pose serious problems to my opponent: 13.e6 ♗xe6 14.♗xc7 ♖xd1+ 15.♖xd1 ♗e7 16.g4 ♘h4 17.♘d4 ♗d7 18.♖e1 ♔f8 19.♗g3 g5 20.♗xh4 gxh4 21.♘e4 ♔g7, although perhaps if I had played more accurately here I could have counted on a miniscule advantage.
13...♗e7 I was happy to see this move. After the trade of knights White's position is very comfortable.
13...c5!? seems like the most critical move. I was planning 14.e6 ♗xe6 15.♗xc7 ♖c8 16.♗h2, with a small advantage, but Black should be able to defend with accuracy.
14.g4 ♘h4 15.♘xh4 ♗xh4 16.♔g2 ♗e6 17.f3 b6 18.b3

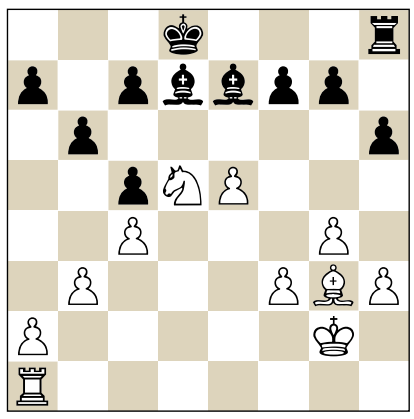


18...c5?! A strategic mistake. After the game Magnus said he wanted to use the d4-square, but underestimated the importance of the d5-square.
I was expecting 18...♖d7 19.c4 ♔d8. If Black is given time to play ...♔c8 and ...♖d8 he will have a fine position. White has to act fast: 20.♗g3 ♗e7 21.f4 g6 22.♖f1!, and the threat of f5 is very unpleasant.

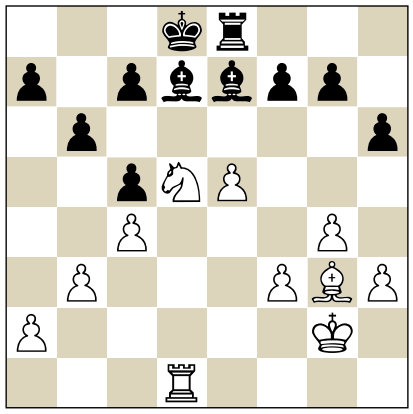
19.c4 Perhaps 19.♗g3 ♗e7 20.c4 was more accurate.
19...♖d7
19...♖d4 20.♗e3 ♖xd1 21.♖xd1 doesn't solve Black's problems.
20.♗g3 ♗e7 21.♖xd7



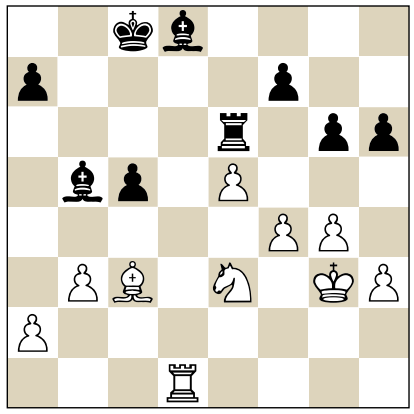
21...♗xd7
Understandably, Magnus wanted his bishop out of the way of f4-f5.
However, 21...♔xd7 was a stronger alternative: 22.f4 g6 23.♖f1 ♔c8 24.f5 gxf5 25.gxf5 ♗d7 and it isn't easy to prove a clear advantage for White.
22.♘c3 ♔d8?!
It made sense to set up a passive but solid defensive formation: 22...♗d8 23.♘d5 ♗c8, and just sit and wait, unpleasant though it may be.
23.♘d5



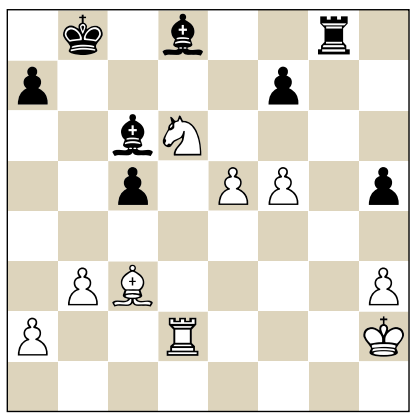
23...♖e8
Magnus played this and the next move surprisingly quickly. He was probably already disgusted with his position.
After 23...c6, White should simplify into an opposite-coloured bishop ending: 24.♘xe7 ♔xe7 25.f4, with good winning chances.
24.♖d1



24...♔c8??
Just losing a pawn for nothing. It's hard to say what Magnus overlooked. 24...c6 25.♘xe7 (25.♘c7 ♖g8 26.e6 fxe6 27.♘xe6+ ♔c8) 25...♖xe7 26.♗h4 g5 27.♗g3 is awful for Black, but there was already no choice.
25.♘xc7 ♖d8 26.♘d5
Besides being up a pawn, White also has a commanding position.
26...♖e8 27.♗e1 ♗d8 28.♗c3 g6 29.♔g3
Now I would prefer 29.a4!, snuffing out any hopes of counterplay.
29...b5 30.cxb5 ♗xb5 31.♘e3 ♖e6 32.f4



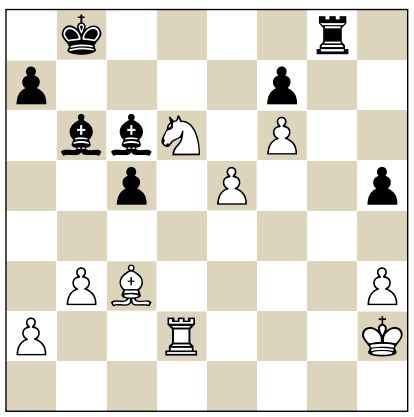
32...♖a6 Black is trying to create counterplay any way he can, but White is too solid. **33.♖d2 h5 34.gxh5 gxh5 35.♘f5 ♖g6+ 36.♔h2 ♗c6 37.♘d6+ ♔b8 38.f5 ♖g8**



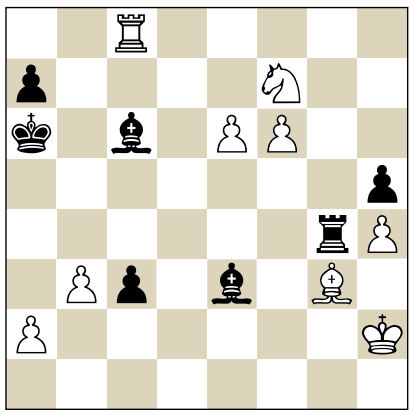
Fully concentrated and very determined, Fabiano Caruana showed once again that he not only wants to challenge Magnus Carlsen, but is also capable of beating the world's number one.

NEW IN CHESS

39.f6! An important move, blocking the bishop's access to h4.
39...♗b6 40.♘c4?
With two minutes on my clock for the last move, I got spooked by Black's counterplay with ...c4 and committed a serious inaccuracy.
40.♘xf7! c4 41.h4! is the game.
40...♖e8? Giving me a second chance! I calculated a bit and decided to take the pawn. 40...♗c7 41.♗a5 is probably winning for White, but he could have put up serious resistance.
41.♘d6 ♖g8



42.♘xf7! A pawn is a pawn, after all.
42...c4 43.h4 ♖g4 44.e6
This is what I hadn't seen before the time control. The bishop will protect everything from e5.
44...♗e3 45.♗e5+ ♔a8 46.♖d8+ ♔b7 47.♗g3 c3 48.♖b8+ ♔a6 49.♖c8



49...♗d5 I spent some time figuring out what happens after 49...♖c4 50.bxc4 c2 51.♖xc6+ ♔a5 52.♗c7+ ♔a4 53.♖a6+ ♔b4 54.♗d6+ ♔c3 55.♗a3. Good calculation, but unfortunately I missed a mate in two with 52.♗e1!.
50.♖xc3 ♗d4 51.♖d3 ♖e4 52.♖d2 ♖xe6 53.♘g5 Black resigned.

NOTES BY
Teimour Radjabov

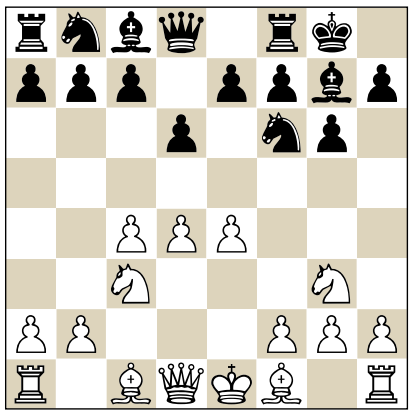
KI 31.6 – E70
Magnus Carlsen
Teimour Radjabov
Shamkir 2014 (5)

This game was played in Round 5 of Vugar Gashimov's Memorial. We were in different tournament situations. I was on 50 per cent, Magnus was on +1 after losing to Caruana with black before this game. Certainly a fight was ahead! It's always interesting to play against the World Champion, and I really enjoyed this fight.

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 g6 3.♘c3 ♗g7 4.e4 d6 The King's Indian Defence. No comment.

5.♘ge2 0-0 6.♘g3

There are so many moves and plans in the opening phase of this opening... But annotating a game and working on the *Encyclopedia of Chess Openings* are two different things. I will not go too deeply into the theoretical debris, but will limit myself to a few of the most recent examples.

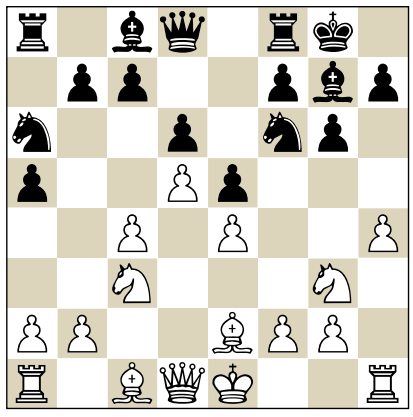


6...e5

An alternative idea is 6...h5 7.♗e2 a6 (7...♘bd7 8.♗e3 e5 9.d5 a5 10.a3 ♘c5 11.h4 ♘g4, somewhat similar to our game, was seen in Nabaty-Smirin, Skopje 2013, which ended in a draw) 8.0-0 c5 9.d5 e5, with a real mix of all possible plans, Bologan-Mamedov, European Club Cup Rhodes 2013, which also ended in a draw.

7.d5 a5 8.♗e2 ♘a6 9.h4

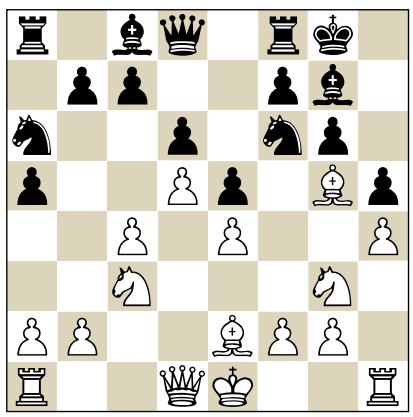
This is not as aggressive as it looks. Only if Black allows h5 will it become kind of tactical and attacking. Generally speaking it's more of a positional move in order to play ♗g5 after Black's ...h5 and get ♕d2 and 0-0-0 in faster.



9...h5

9...c6 10.h5 cxd5 11.cxd5 ♘c5 12.♗e3 ♕b6 was played in Lutz-Gelfand, Horgen 1994. Gelfand won this game. Lutz never castled and tried the ♘f1-d2 plan, which is going nowhere, as after ♘c4 Black may just go back to c7 with his queen, threatening ...b5 later on. The computer suggests changing direction here and going for 13.0-0 h6 14.♕d2 and play on the queenside. It then claims that White is better, but it's far from obvious for a practical game. The game Lutz-Gelfand continued 13.0-0 ♗d7 14.h6 ♗h8 15.♕d2 a4 16.f3 ♖fc8, with chances for both sides!

10.♗g5

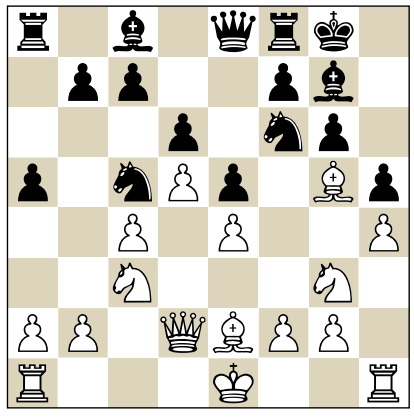


10...♕e8

Another possibility was 10...♘c5?! 11.♗xh5 gxh5 12.♘xh5 ♘cd7. To be honest, I didn't even consider this. Too beautiful: 13.♘xg7 ♔xg7 14.f4, and White has the initiative.

11.♕d2 ♘c5

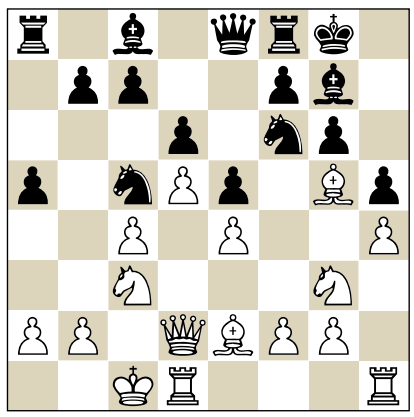
Also interesting was 11...♘h7!? 12.♗e3 ♕e7 (too optimistic is 12...f5? 13.exf5 gxf5 14.♗xh5 ♕d7 15.f4, and there is no way to get counterplay here; White is too solid) 13.♘f1 f5 14.exf5 gxf5 15.♗g5 ♘xg5 16.♕xg5 ♕xg5 17.hxg5 a4, and I am sure Black has strong compensation for the pawn on the h-file.



12.0-0-0

The computer's suggestion is 12.♘b5, which I saw during the game. If the queen goes to d8, ♗xh5 is in the air. Black can just defend the pawn with ...♕d7 or some other move, but there is also 12...♘cxe4 13.♘xe4 ♘xe4 14.♕e3 ♘xg5 15.♘xc7 ♕a4 16.♘xa8 ♕b4+ 17.♕d2 ♕xd2+ 18.♔xd2 ♘e4+ 19.♔e1 ♘c5, and I would prefer to play with Black here.

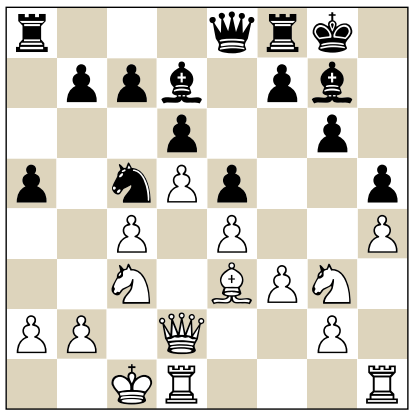
Instead of the text-move, 12.f3 is probably the most natural, not allowing ...♘g4: 12...♘h7!? 13.♗e3 b6 14.♗d3 f5, with counterplay for Black.



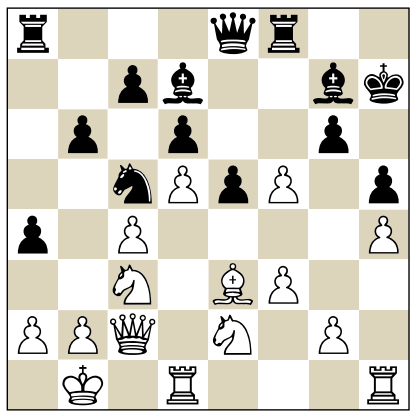
12...♘g4!

An important move. Now White has to exchange the e2-bishop for the knight.

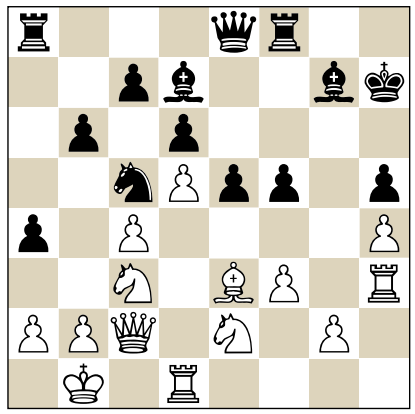
13.♗xg4 The alternatives are no better. After 13.♖df1 f6 White will eventually play ♗xg4 anyway (and note that after 14.♗xg4 Black also has 14...fxg5!? besides taking on g4 with the c8-bishop).
And 13.♕e1 f6 14.♗d2 ♗h6 is quite OK for Black.
13...♗xg4 14.f3 After 14.♖df1 ♗d7 the rook is far from defending its monarch! And ...b5 is coming!
14...♗d7 15.♗e3



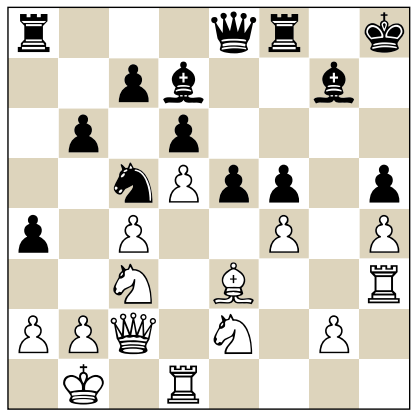
15...b6
I didn't like the position after 15...b5 16.cxb5 ♗xb5 17.♗xc5 dxc5 18.♘f1 very much. White is going to play g4 at some point and I am not sure how to organize direct threats on the b-file.
16.♔b1 ♔h7 16...f5 was already possible here, but I wanted to wait for ♘ge2 first, as it looked to me that White doesn't have any ideas to improve his position anyway.
17.♕c2 a4
17...♗h6 is an OK move, but I didn't want to allow any ♗xc5 followed by a4 ideas. Even though after 18.♗xc5 bxc5 19.a4 I was sure that Black would be OK, I didn't like this, with ♘b5 to follow and pressure on a5 later on.
18.♘ge2 f5 19.exf5



19...gxf5 This is more of a fighting move than 19...♗xf5, which I thought is about equal: 20.♘e4 ♘xe4 21.fxe4 ♗g4 22.♖df1 a3, and Black is even slightly better, but a draw should be the normal outcome.
20.♖h3
The rook looks a bit naive on this square, combined with f3 and ♗e3, but the clear threat is ♖g3-g5, sometimes with ideas of eliminating the g7-bishop.



20...♔h8! Fighting against ♖g3 and threatening ...f4, followed by ...♗f5. White has to do something, otherwise ♖hh1 is the only option.
21.f4
The most logical reaction, as playing 21.♖hh1 looked awful. Now the rook is heading to g5 again via g3 if Black doesn't take measures!



21...♘e4!?
A good move, preventing ♖g3. Now ...♕g6 is coming and the bad positioning of White's pieces starts to tell. Still, including ...a3 would have been even better: 21...a3! 22.b3 ♘e4, and all the ensuing complications are as in the game, only even better for Black, with the a3-pawn creating further threats to White's king.

Magnus Carlsen's losses in classical games since he became Number 1 in the world rankings (January 1, 2010)

DATE	PLACE	OPPONENT	COLOUR (CARLSEN)	FINAL RESULT
26-01-2010	Wijk aan Zee	**Kramnik**	White	1st
24-09-2010	Khanty-Mansiysk	**Jobava**	Black	-
27-09-2010	Khanty-Mansiysk	**Adams**	Black	-
01-10-2010	Khanty-Mansiysk	**Sjugirov**	Black	-
09-10-2010	Bilbao	**Kramnik**	Black	3rd
10-10-2010	Bilbao	**Anand**	White	
08-12-2010	London	**McShane**	Black	1st
10-12-2010	London	**Anand**	Black	
17-01-2011	Wijk aan Zee	**Giri**	White	3rd
26-01-2011	Wijk aan Zee	**Nepomniachtchi**	White	
23-07-2011	Biel	**Vachier-Lagrave**	Black	1st
28-09-2011	Bilbao	**Vallejo**	Black	1st
24-01-2012	Wijk aan Zee	**Karjakin**	White	2nd
24-09-2012	Bilbao	**Caruana**	Black	1st
17-03-2013	Stavanger	**Wang Hao**	White	2nd
29-03-2013	London	**Ivanchuk**	White	1st
01-04-2013	London	**Svidler**	White	
15-06-2013	Moscow	**Caruana**	White	2nd
23-04-2014	Shamkir	**Caruana**	Black	1st
24-04-2014	Shamkir	**Radjabov**	White	
	Losses with White: 10; losses with Black: 10			

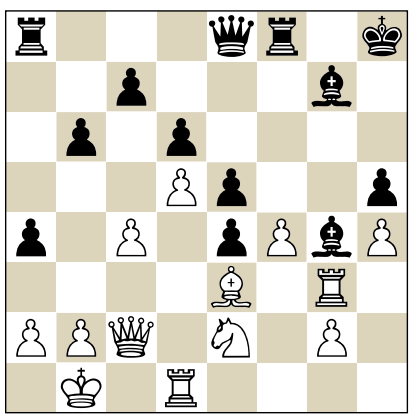
Fabiano Caruana
3 wins

Vladimir Kramnik
2 wins

Anish Giri
shortest win (22 moves)

22.♘xe4 Carlsen is not going to wait passively. He prepares an exchange sacrifice, with great complications in which Black's weak king may become an important factor, especially as I was already running short on time.
It was also possible to try and create some sort of fortress with 22.♖f3 a3 23.b3 ♕g6 24.g3. But while Black may try to slightly improve the position of his pieces, it's not clear what White will do next.

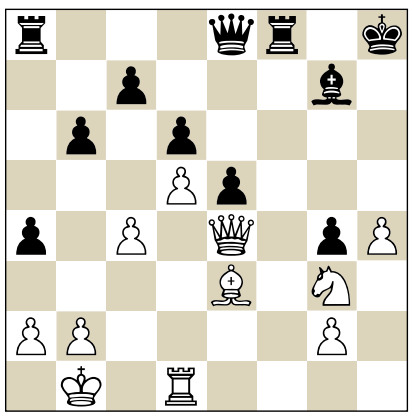
22...fxe4 23.♖g3 ♗g4



24.♖xg4 There is no choice.

24...hxg4 25.f5 ♖xf5 26.♘g3 ♖f8

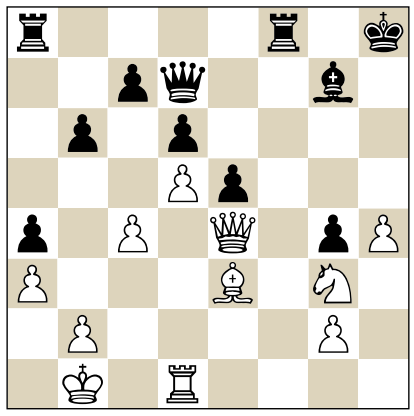
27.♕xe4 White has blocked the centre and h5-h6 is coming. I considered ...♖f4 at some point to open up the g7 bishop, but it didn't seem to offer genuine winning chances.



27...♕d7

Always good was 27...a3. There was no need to wait with this move, as it creates mating ideas around White's king: 28.b3 ♖f7! (I was trying to figure out how to bring my queen to h7 and was mostly considering ...♕f7, ...♗f6 or ...♕f7, ...♕g8-h7, but this neat way is especially nice, since ...a3 has already been played!) 29.♕xg4 ♕g8 30.♘e4 ♕h7 (now ...♖f4 is in the air and Black is just winning) 31.♖e1 (31.♔c1 ♖f4!! 32.♗xf4 ♕xe4 33.♕h5+ ♔g8 34.♗g5 ♖f8, and Black wins) 31...♗f6 and when the a-rook joins the party, White is helpless.

28.a3 White is trying to hide his king on a2 and exploit the black king's position with h5-h6.

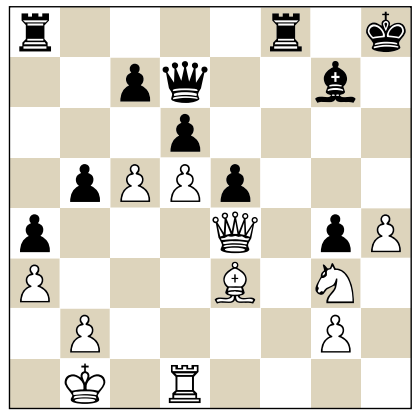


28...b5!

A very strong move. Magnus said at the press conference that he thought White had excellent compensation, but after this move the position starts to be really shaky for White.

29.c5

After 29.cxb5 ♕xb5 30.♕g6 ♖ab8 31.♖d2 e4 32.♕h5+ ♔g8 33.♕g6 ♖f6 there will come ....♖bf8 or ...♕b3, and White's king is too weak!



29...dxc5! Another very important move after 28...b5!. Lines are being opened for Black's rooks and they develop strong play against White's king.

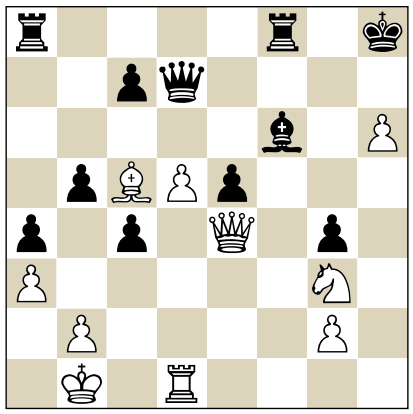
30.h5 c4 I also thought about 30...♖a6, but 30...c4 looked much stronger to me at the board, and it still does after checking the position at home.

31.h6 Interesting was 31.♔a2, finally revealing the idea of 28.a3!, but White would still be in trouble after 31...♖ae8 32.h6 ♗f6, and his position falls apart, as ...♕h7 and ...c3 are terrible threats: 33.♘h5 ♕h7 34.♕xg4 c3 35.♗c1 ♕g8, and Black should be winning.

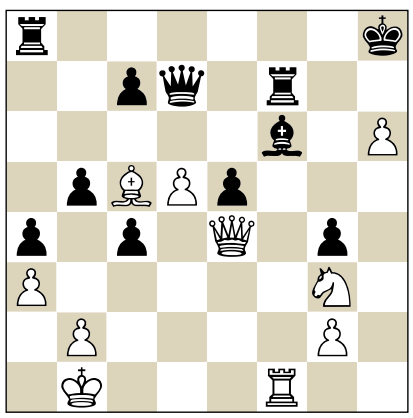
NEW IN CHESS

The ritual. Before the game begins Teimour Radjabov 'j'adoubes' all his pawns and pieces.

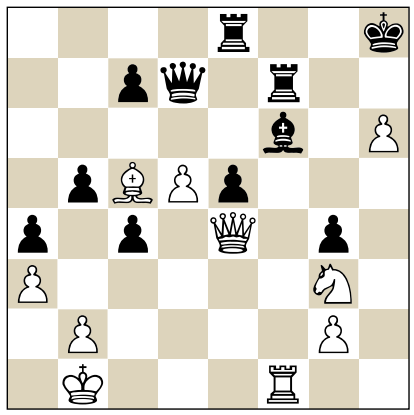
31...♗f6 32.♗c5



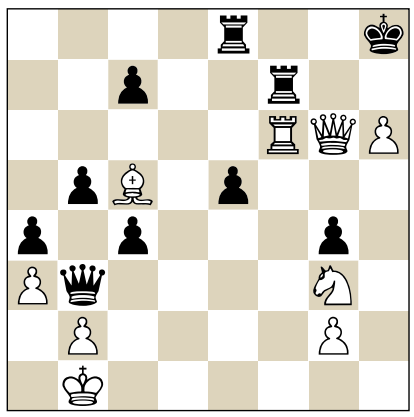
32...♖f7 32...♕h7?!, trying to release the tension and White's pressure on Black's king, wouldn't work due to 33.♗xf8 ♕xe4+ 34.♘xe4 ♖xf8 35.♖f1, and the position should be a draw. **33.♖f1** In case of 33.♘h5, 33...♖g8 wins.



33...♖e8! This move is very important, otherwise ♘h5 could be dangerous. Now e5 is protected and Black can regroup with ...♗g5-f4 or ...♗d8.



34.♗b4 There is no good advice for White anymore; the position is already lost. After 34.♕g6 ♕xd5 35.♖xf6 ♕d1+ 36.♔a2 ♕b3+ 37.♔b1



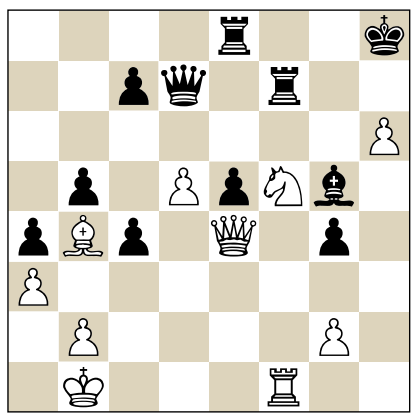
ANALYSIS DIAGRAM

37...c3!! wins, according to the computer: 38.♖f2 ♖d8 (38...♕d1+ 39.♔a2 b4!! is even simpler, according to the engine, since if the bishop takes on b4, White will be unable to defend against ...♖d8 with ♗e3-c1! (39...cxb2?? 40.♖xb2 ♕d5+ 41.♔a1 is a draw as compared to the line with ...♖df8, the rook on f7 is hanging) 40.♗xb4 ♕b3+ 41.♔b1 ♖d8, and wins) 39.♗e3 ♖d1+ 40.♗c1 b4, and Black wins.

34...♗g5 I had around one minute here, but I was able to calculate all my next moves and Magnus's ideas. 35...c6 is a very important finesse.

35.♘f5

Otherwise Black plays ...♗f4 anyway.



35...c6! The killing move. Black is completely winning.

After 35...♗f4 36.♘h4 things would be very complicated again!

36.♗d6 After 36.d6 ♖ef8 the a3-f8 diagonal is blocked, and Black will be a rook up.

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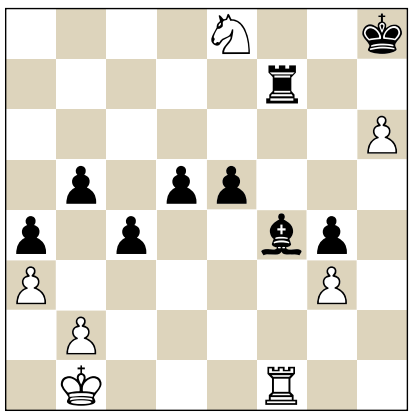
Everything in style. Tall high-heeled hostesses welcomed the players in front of a statue of Heydar Aliyev (1923-2003), the legendary Azeri leader.

36...♗f4 37.♘g7 37.♖xf4 won't help either: 37...exf4 38.♗e5+ ♖xe5 39.♕xe5+ ♔h7 40.♘d6, and now both 40...cxd5 and 40...♖e7 are winning.

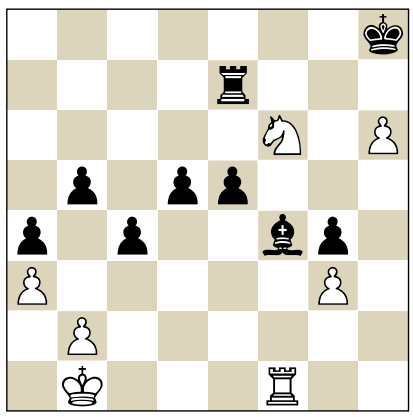
37...♕xd6 38.♘xe8 ♕xd5

Everything is forced here.

39.♕xd5 cxd5 40.g3



40...♔h7! My first intention, down to a few seconds, was to play 40...♖e7, which was also good, but 40...♔h7 seemed like a more clear-cut win. After 40...♖e7 41.♘f6 there are a few more tricks in the air:



ANALYSIS DIAGRAM

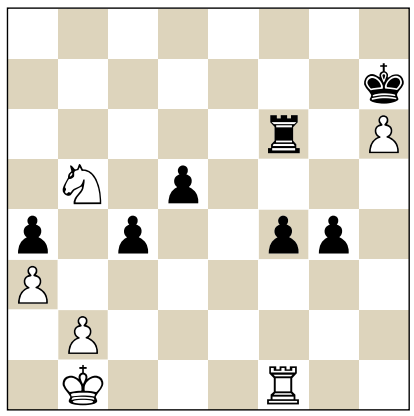
41...♗xh6 42.♖h1 (42.♘xd5 ♖d7, and I wasn't sure if this would be so easy to win, since b5 is too weak. But here, too, Black is objectively winning) 42...♔g7 43.♖xh6 ♖e6! – a move that you have to see from afar.

41.gxf4 After 41.♘d6 ♖d7 42.♘xb5 ♗xg3 Black has too many pawns and the d-pawn will queen very soon.

41...exf4 42.♘d6

Otherwise the pawns are going forward without any obstacles.

42...♖f6 43.♘xb5 It took me some time here to understand which pawn push is better. In the end it seemed to make no real difference.

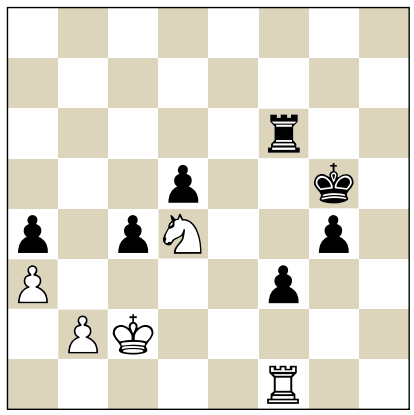


43...f3 Also winning was 43...g3 44.♘d4 ♔xh6 45.♔c2 ♔h5 46.♘f3 ♔g4 47.♘e5+ ♔h3.

44.♘d4 ♔xh6 Bad was 44...♖f4 45.♘e6 ♖e4? 46.♘g5+ ♔xh6 47.♘xf3 gxf3 48.♖xf3, and I don't see how Black can win this endgame: 48...♔g5 49.♖f8 d4 50.♔c1 d3 51.♔d1 ♖e2 52.♖g8+, and White should draw.

45.♔c2 ♔g5

The king helps the f- and g-pawns march. White cannot do anything.



46.♔d2 f2 47.♘e2 ♖f3 48.♔c2 ♔h4 49.♖h1+ 49...♖h3 50.♖f1 g3 51.♔d2 ♔g4 And Carlsen resigned, as the black king comes to f3 and g2.

I am happy about my play in the zeitnot part. In the middlegame, around moves 30-40 in the time-scramble, I was able to find all the best moves.

NOTES BY
Peter Heine Nielsen

QP 6.10 – D02
Magnus Carlsen
Fabiano Caruana
Shamkir 2014 (10)

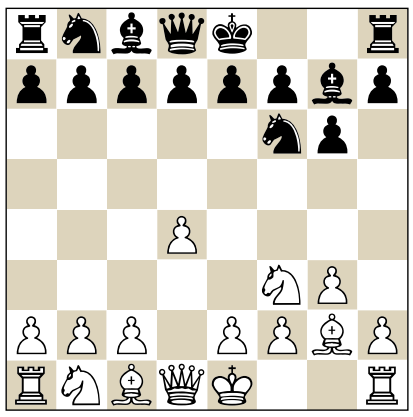
After two unexpected losses in Rounds 4 and 5, Magnus recovered nicely with two wins after the free day in Rounds 6 and 7. But then he slowed down with a couple of draws, while Caruana continued at full speed with two wins.

At the start of the final round, Caruana had caught up with Magnus, turning their game into a clear final. Although Caruana had won their first encounter, the tie-break favoured Magnus, as the number of wins would decide in case of a tie for first. Even so, both players were eager to fight and try for unshared first, as well as ending the tournament on a high note.

1.d4 ♘f6 2.♘f3 g6 3.g3!?

While predicting that Caruana would go for the Grünfeld was easy, guessing how Magnus would respond to it, was quite another matter.

3...♗g7 4.♗g2



4...c5 Caruana also played an early ...c5 against Nakamura in Wijk aan Zee this year. It is a very common and popular system, which is also played a lot by Radjabov. However, Magnus, unlike for instance Nakamura, has not yet played c4 here, and that gives him an extra option.

4...0-0 5.0-0 c5 might have been the right move order for Black, as after 6.c3 cxd4 7.cxd4 d5 Black gets a well-known position from the ...c6-d5 lines, but with White having castled, which makes a difference, as ♘e5 or ♘c3 would have been relevant white options otherwise. However, 6.dxc5!? would be an interesting try, as it's not that clear how Black will get the pawn back.

5.c3!?

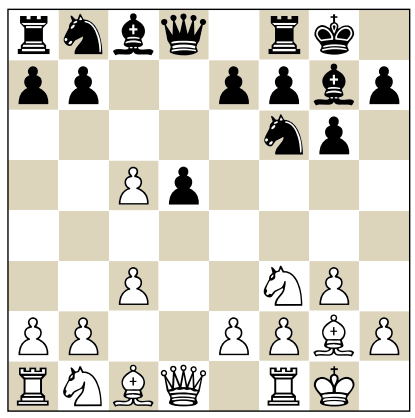
A very unambitious-looking move, but with quite some sting. Obvious is 5...cxd4 6.cxd4 d5, with a well-known position from the ...c6-d5 line. White has lost some options, for instance the ♕a4 line with which Magnus scored a nice win against Gelfand earlier this year in Zurich. It could also be argued that if Caruana had wanted to play the ...c6-d5 system, well then he would just have played it! A fitting move would have been 5...♕c7, as played by Gashimov himself. And if Caruana had known this, he would quite likely have done so, but the time used by both players around here indicated that they were already out of their opening preparation after 5 c3!?.

5...d5 6.dxc5! The only way to challenge Caruana's move.

6...0-0 7.0-0

NEW IN CHESS

Is it winning? Sarkhan Gashimov and the Carlsen team (Björn Gunnar Nesse, Peter Heine Nielsen and father Henrik) follow the last moves of Carlsen-Caruana in the press centre.



7...a5!?

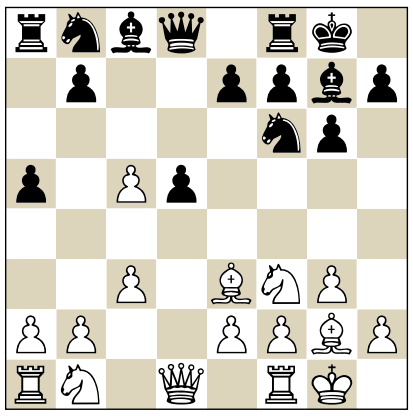
The modern treatment, but actually most of the tests of this set-up have been with reversed colours, leaving the gambiting player a tempo down.

Twenty years ago, in the Candidates' match between Romanishin and Anand, the Ukrainian allowed Vishy to play ...b5 and keep his pawn. In fact, he did it so successfully that the line evaporated from practice for quite a while. But recently, by playing a4, and thus stopping ...b5, White has been reasonably successful, and Caruana quite boldly tries out the concept, even with a tempo less.

8.♗e3

An ambitious move, aiming to keep the extra pawn. 8.c4!? also has its

points, as White wants ♘c3 or cxd5 next, and if 8...dxc4 9.♘e5 after a later ♘xc4 the b6-square becomes inviting due to the weakening ...a5.

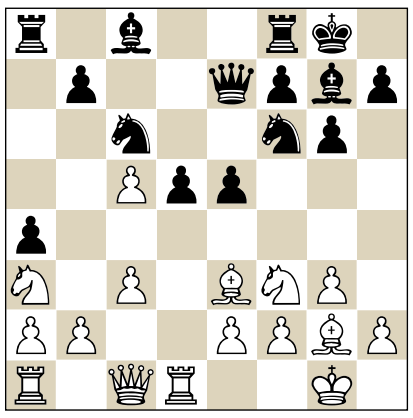


8...♘c6

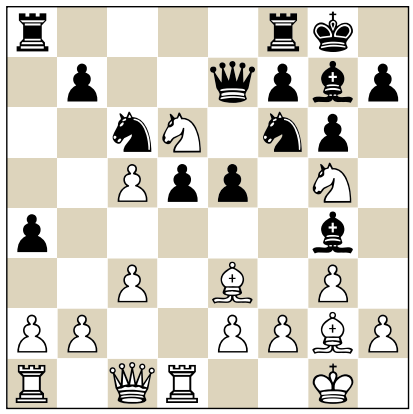
8...♘g4 was an attempt to dislodge the bishop from e3, in order later to try and win back the c-pawn: 9.♗d4 e5 10.h3 exd4 11.hxg4 dxc3 12.♘xc3 ♗xg4, and now, after White takes on d5 (either way), he will be a pawn up, but Black will have the typical Grünfeld compensation. Most likely, Magnus would have chosen the double-edged 9.♕d2!?, with a very interesting position, playable for both sides.

9.♘a3 a4 10.♕c1 e5 11.♖d1 ♕e7

One has to admire Caruana's courage. Playing Black against the world's number one he has sacrificed a pawn and is still playing it calmly and positionally! Whether White is better or whether Black has sufficient practical compensation, is very much a matter of belief and apparently not a huge concern for either player, as true to their style they are both just trying to put as much pressure on their opponent as possible.



12.♘b5 ♗e6 13.♘g5 ♗g4 14.♘d6

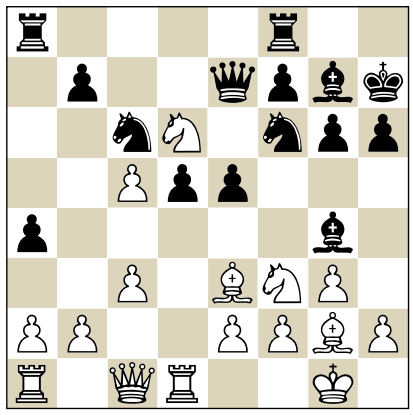


14...h6!

14...♗xe2? 15.♖xd5! was Magnus's point. Taking the exchange with 15...♘xd5 16.♗xd5 ♘d8 (else f7 drops) and now, for example, 17.♕c2 ♗g4 18.♕e4 leads to a dominating and probably winning position for White.

But of course Caruana is not tempted by material gains, but continues to play in gambit style, keeping his strong centre intact.

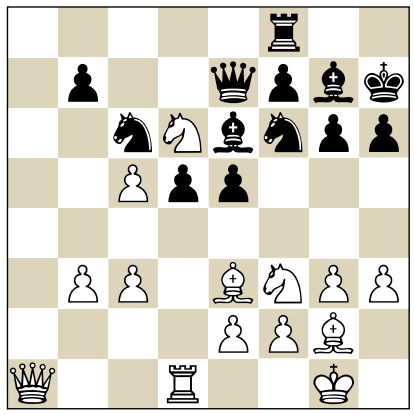
15.♘f3 ♔h7



16.h3?!

In this tournament, Carlsen occasionally suffered from moderate time-pressure, so maybe in this decisive game he wanted to keep things under control. But while the move was executed quickly, it also weakens his kingside structure unnecessarily. The immediate 16.b4!? would have been better, and despite the fact that Black certainly has decent compensation, it seems to me that White's position is more promising.

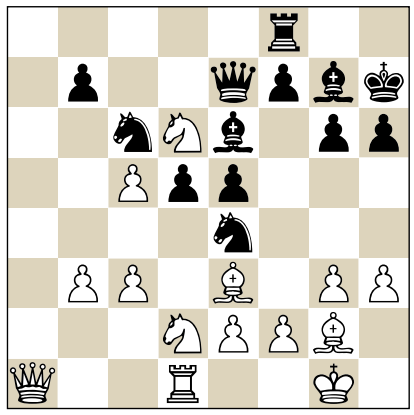
16...♗e6 17.b4 axb3 18.axb3 ♖xa1 19.♕xa1



19...♘e4!

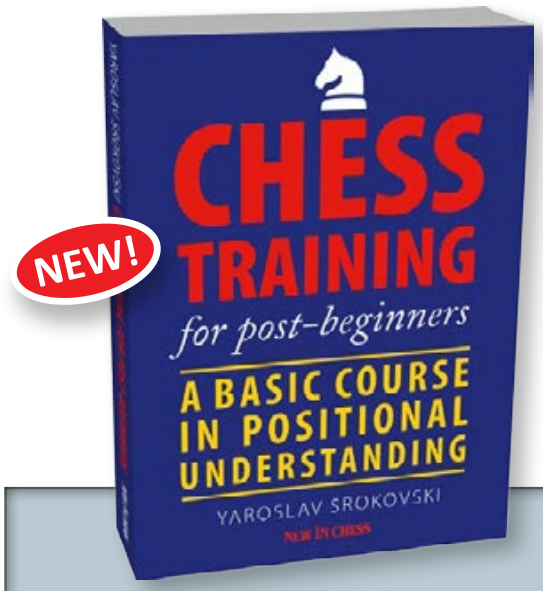
Suddenly Black has very serious counterplay, and it is no longer clear at all who has the more promising chances. One problem is that 20.c4, which seemingly undermines the black centre, is very strongly met by 20...d4! 21.♗xd4!? ♘xg3!, when Black still might end up a pawn down, but with excellent compensation, as White's kingside pawns are weak, especially due to the pawn on h3. Even worse would be 20.♘xe4 dxe4 21.♘d2 f5, when the bishop on e3 feels very uncomfortable. Now 22.♘c4 f4 23.♗c1 indeed keeps the extra pawn, and Black's initiative after 23...e3!? is rather threatening. Magnus comes up with White's best choice.

20.♘d2



20...f5?

This, however, is a grave mistake. 20...d4!? was Black's most complex and most interesting option. White can take on e4 with as many as three pieces, but in all cases (by taking on e3 and after fxe3 going ...f5) Black, despite being two pawns down, has excellent chances. Again the weakening h3 makes itself felt, as g3 is further weakened by fxe3. If anyone, it seems



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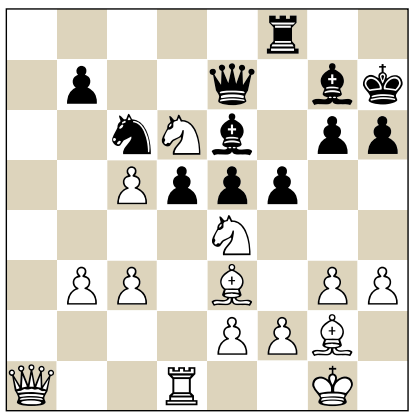
that Black has the better chances. But as 21.♗xd4 ♘xg3 leads to a similar scenario, it's not that clear how Magnus would have responded. Maybe with the ingenious 21.♗xh6!?, but after 21...♘xc3 Black keeps a strong initiative for the sacrificed pawn.

Both players seemed surprised at the press conference when confronted with the possibility of 20...♘xd6!?. They thought that after 21.cxd6 ♕xd6 22.♘c4 White has a nice position: although Black has got the pawn back, White has the initiative, and after 22...♕d8 23.♗b6! he has a considerable edge, as after 23...♕d7 24.♗xd5! ♗xd5 25.e4 ♕xh3 26.exd5 White's breakthrough in the centre is more relevant than his somewhat weakened king's position. However, as indicated by the computers, 21...♕d7!? was an interesting way of sticking to the positional pawn sacrifice by attacking White's pawn on h3, and if defended by 22.♔h2, then 22...e4, or even ...f5, with quite decent compensation.

21.♘2xe4



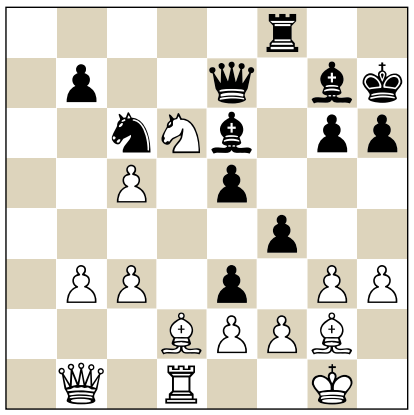
21...dxe4

Compared to the line after 20.♘xe4, the difference is that the white knight is now on d6, and not on d2. Which makes a huge difference. For a start, ...f4 is much less of a threat, as it does not trap the bishop on e3, and so White can do something much more useful than removing his d2-knight. And, of course, on d6 the knight is very well placed to begin with.

22.♕b1 f4

Objectively speaking, this move may be more weakening than doing any good. On the other hand, allowing White to stabilize even further offers very few long-term prospects, so Caruana goes for it, and hopes for the best.

23.♗d2! e3



24.♗e1!

Maybe this is very modest-looking, but in this manner White keeps his kingside under control as well as he can, and it becomes very hard for Black to make any further progress. White will soon take over.

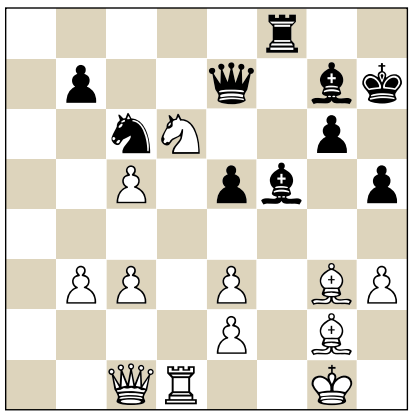
24...♗f5 25.♕c1 h5

Trying to confuse the issue. After 25...exf2+ 26.♗xf2 fxg3 27.♗xg3 White's kingside is very solid and the queen on c1 protects the g5-square.

26.fxe3 fxg3 27.♗xg3

Shamkir 2014 — **cat. XX**

			1	2	3	4	5	6		TPR
1	Magnus Carlsen	IGM NOR 2881	*	0 1	1 1	0 ½	½ ½	1 1	6½	2870
2	Fabiano Caruana	IGM ITA 2783	1 0	*	½ ½	½1	½ ½	0 1	5½	2816
3	Hikaru Nakamura	IGM USA 2772	0 0	½ ½	*	½ ½	½ ½	1 1	5	2782
4	Teimour Radjabov	IGM AZE 2713	1½	½ 0	½ ½	*	½ ½	½ ½	5	2794
5	Sergey Karjakin	IGM RUS 2772	½ ½	½ ½	½ ½	½ ½	*	½ ½	5	2782
6	Shakhriyar Mamedyarov	IGM AZE 2760	0 0	1 0	0 0	½ ½	½ ½	*	3	2634



27...♕g5

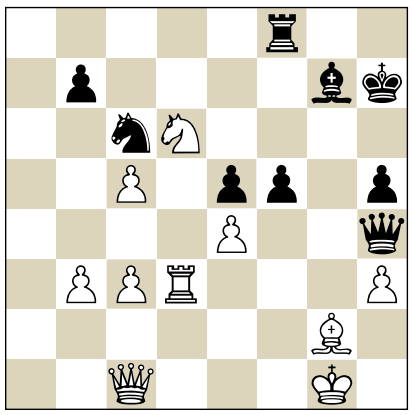
This was Caruana's point. By luring a white pawn to e3 he wanted to block the white queen and get access to the g5-square for his own queen, which looks like serious counterplay. But Magnus has a nice resource up his sleeve.

28.e4! ♕xg3 29.♖d3!

Forcing back the black queen before taking on f5, and thus not allowing ...♕g6.

29...♕h4 30.exf5 gxf5 31.e4

Although they may look rather threatening, the black knight and bishop do not participate in the attack, and Black has no way to exploit White's somewhat weak king. With the text-move White gets access to f5, while not allowing ...e4, which would have activated both Black's minor pieces.

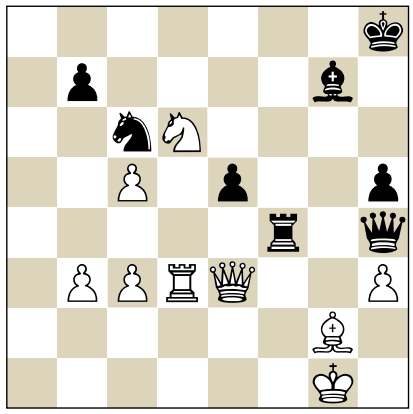


31...fxe4 32.♗xe4+ ♔h8 33.♕e3 ♖f4 34.♗g2

To compound his problems, Caruana was now also very low on time. But more importantly, White is a pawn up and he is better coordinated. The World Champion efficiently mops up the game and tournament victory.

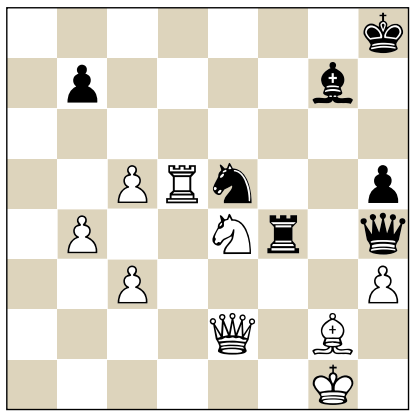
NEW IN CHESS

The second part of the three-tier closing ceremony was a riveting show of Azeri dance and music.

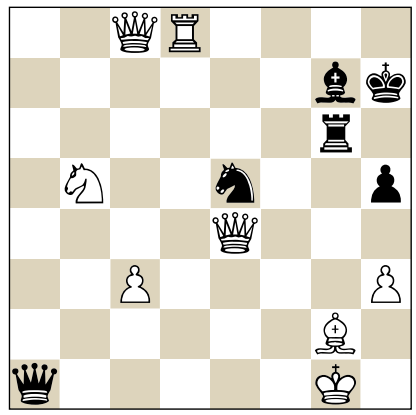


34...♕e7 35.♕e2 ♕h4 36.b4 e4 37.♘xe4 ♘e5 38.♖d5

Black has got the e5-square for his knight, but White is too solid, as his minor pieces protect everything around his king.



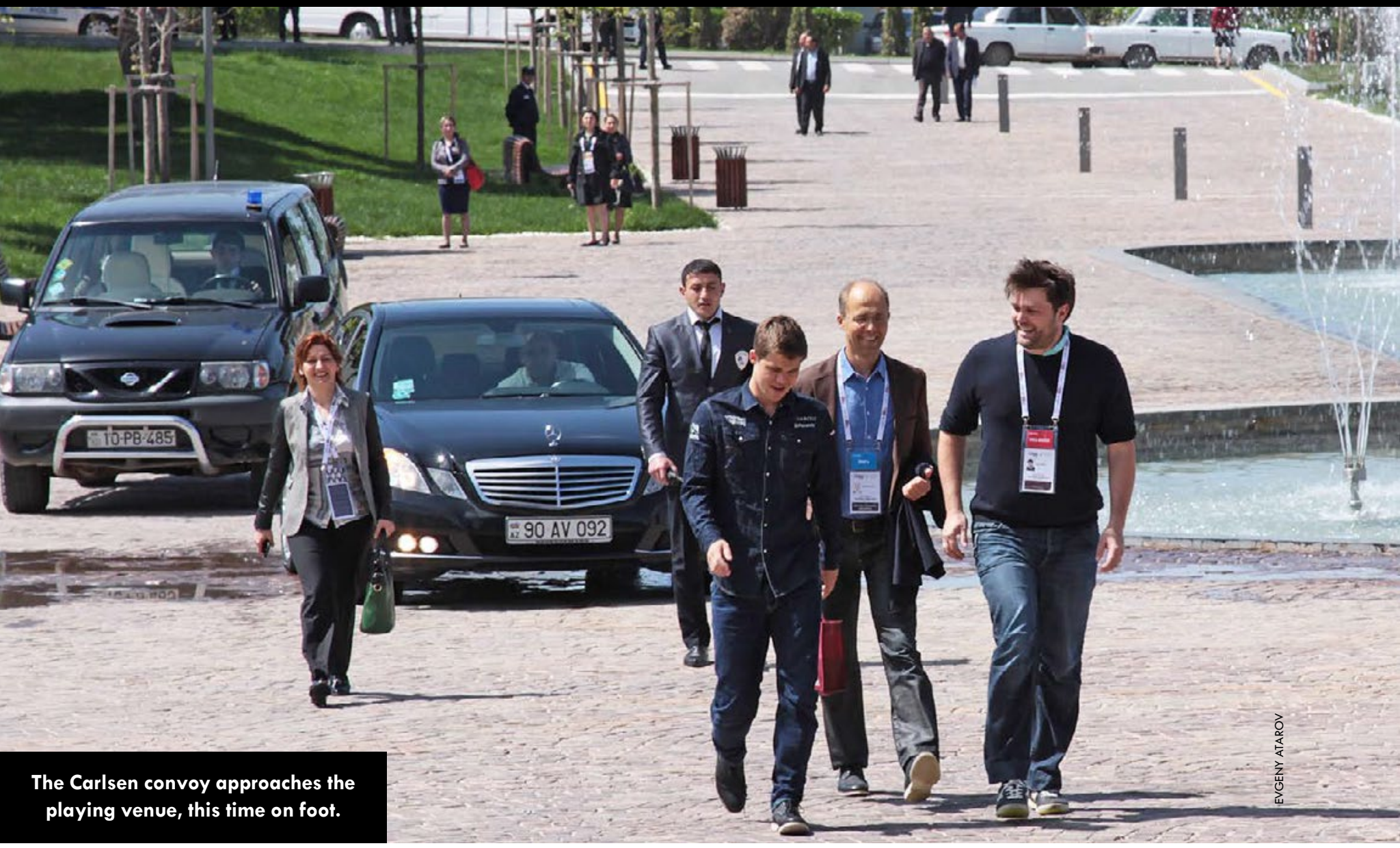
38...♔g8 39.b5 ♖f5 40.c6 bxc6 41.bxc6 ♕e7 42.♘d6 ♖g5 43.♘b5 ♕e6 44.♖d8+ ♔h7 45.♕e4+ ♖g6 46.c7 ♕a6 47.c8♕ ♕a1+



48.♔f2! This steers clear of all dangers, as after **48...♕b2+ 49.♔e1** Black has run out of meaningful checks, as the white rook can now retreat to d1, so Caruana resigned.

A nice win for Magnus, who showed good morale both in this game and in the second half of the tournament in general, after two tough losses.

But mainly the tournament was an excellent way of remembering Vugar and paying tribute to his memory. Hopefully it will become a tradition. ■



The Carlsen convoy approaches the playing venue, this time on foot.

EVGENY ATAROV

‘The plan is just to play well, win all my games.’

Interview with Magnus Carlsen

The unwavering wish of his hosts to continuously look after and pamper the World Champion during his stay in Shamkir is splendidly illustrated by the photo above. It was taken on one of the days that Magnus Carlsen chose not to go to the playing venue by car, but to bridge the short distance between the hotel and the Heydar Aliyev Conference Centre on foot. This was fine, of course, if that’s what he wanted, but what about the rest of the daily Carlsen convoy?

And so, as Magnus, his father Henrik and his second Peter Heine Nielsen embarked on their brisk 800 metre walk, they were followed by a security guard (including walkie-talkie), Ayna Javanshir of the organizing committee (in case a translation was required on the way), a car (in case the champ had second thoughts halfway and preferred to take the car after all) and a police car for any other kind of contingency or emergency.

Dirk Jan ten Geuzendam

'In general they treated me like royalty here.' Magnus Carlsen says it without a tinge of immodesty or bragging. He is truly grateful to the Synergy Group, which spared no effort to make him feel at ease during the Vugar Gashimov Memorial. His wishes were their commands, and if he didn't have any wishes, they imagined some and generously fulfilled them.

We're in the living-room of Carlsen's suite on the first floor of the Excelsior Hotel, which could easily house a small family. He's slumped on the couch, from where he has a good view of the gigantic flat-screen TV in the middle of the room that is switched off. His suite was his haven of peace and quiet during the tournament. Here he could withdraw from the permanent attention that was waiting for him wherever he went. Here he had his meals, preferring not to go to the restaurant downstairs where the other players gathered. There is a chessboard and a laptop computer on one of the tables where he prepared for the games with Peter Heine Nielsen.

It's ten in the evening and he's just eaten. The dinner party in the garden of the hotel has already started, and he intends to join it later – out of courtesy towards the organizers. But he doesn't want to stay too long. Or make any plans. He likes to follow his mood, which this time means that he will make an appearance at the dinner party towards midnight and will end up in the hotel bar at an even later hour, having a great time playing blitz and backgammon.

The dinner party is the end of a three-tier closing ceremony. First there was a reception at the playing venue with drinks and food for local guests, followed by the prize-giving on the stage of the auditorium. Next the players were taken to a concert in a small football stadium a short bus drive away, where one hour of traditional Azeri dancing and music was dedicated to the chess tournament. At the prize-giving Carlsen gave a short but inspired speech. At the concert he was less comfortable. He had barely sat down when it became clear from his contorted face that the loud music was about the last thing he was waiting for. Before one minute had passed, he had made up his mind. He got up and left with his father and second in tow, escaping from the loud music, but also missing a colourful and mesmerizing show.

> 'Fabiano has beaten me three times over the last year and a half, so obviously every time when I manage to get one back it's nice.'

Back at the hotel he has agreed to do a number of short interviews. Due to the immense number of requests he receives these days, his attitude towards interviews seems to have changed a bit of late. He still sees it as a normal or at least inevitable part of his profession and tries to answer questions of all sorts to the best of his abilities. But occasionally he doesn't manage to hide his lack of interest and has no qualms letting an interview go to ruins when he feels the questions are stupid or when he is literally struck dumb by the approach of a journalist. A telling example was a recent interview for Vice.com that never took off. The interviewer, Stephen Keefe, was so uncertain and so clumsy in his attempts to flatter Carlsen that they never got into a normal conversation. In the end Keefe, a keen chess fan, was so disappointed and frustrated with the result that he wrote a story entitled 'Magnus Carlsen, World Chess Champion, is kind of a dick.' Which obviously didn't escape the attention of the Norwegian press. In turn *VG*, the newspaper that is one of Carlsen's sponsors, interviewed Keefe to find out what had gone wrong. One day later the Canadian withdrew the interview, leaving at least the suspicion that he understood he was largely to blame himself for the failed interview.

As he indicates that he is ready to talk, Magnus briefly wrong-foots me by opening the conversation with a bored-sounding 'So, what you want to know?' But it's more a joke to get things going than anything else, since he proves to be in a relaxed and forthcoming mood.

At the press conference you had some reservations about the final game, saying that at some point you were not entirely convinced how it was going. But I thought this was a dream final game. You got the kind of position that you must have been looking for, and at least to the outside world it looked like a brilliant win.

'I don't know if there was much brilliance about it, because it wasn't very clear-cut, but of course there were some psychological games going on in the opening. To be honest, we had prepared something and it didn't work. So when I went to the game, I had absolutely no clue what to play. Then I decided, if I go knight f3, g3, then nothing is going to go horribly wrong anyway.'

Did his ...c5 surprise you?

'A little bit, but then I thought, it allows c3, and of course, if he decides to take, I force him to play the c6, d5 variation. Which is not, of course, by any means an achievement when it comes purely to chess, but thinking

psychologically it would have been a slight achievement, especially if you are of the opinion that he needed to win to win the tournament.'

Does it give you a kick to be in such a situation? You can have your revenge for the first game that you lost, and if you win the game, you win the tournament.
'It's a little bit like the St. Louis Sinquefield Cup (last year). There I would have won the tournament with a draw in the last round, but to win that game, you know, (starts laughing) feels so much better.'

As there was additional psychological play, because it was Levon (Aronian)...
'Yeah, obviously. I mean, Fabiano has beaten me three times over the last year and a half, so obviously every time I manage to get one back it's nice.'

If you're winning as much as you do, is this the salt in the soup? The things that keep you going?
'Yeah, of course. For this tournament, when I lost to Fabiano, and against Radjabov as well, I very much wanted to have my revenge.'

What did these two consecutive losses do to you? Were they a double nuisance and nothing more?
'I'd spent a lot of energy on the first few games, and then, when those games came, I was not feeling so great. I thought I was coming down with something. At that point I didn't care and was prepared to let my tournament go to hell (laughs).'

You can be that self-destructive?
'Apparently. And then the free day came, and there was the football. I didn't want to play football actually, I didn't want to show my face at all anywhere. But then I got some of the aggression out in the football. I was a real asshole on the football pitch...'

You even kicked Faik (Gasanov, the chief arbiter, who at 73 is still a fanatical football player – DJtG)...
'Yeah. But not on purpose...'

Did that give you a shock when you saw him tumble down?
'Yeah, I mean, I was like, what have I done? I felt pretty bad as a human being right then. But it didn't stop me from continuing to complain to the referees and all that. I mean, I thought I had a case most of the times, obviously.'

That aggression was what you were looking for?
'Yeah, and then obviously playing Mamedyarov after the rest day is nice. I didn't know how exactly I was going to win that game, but then he sacrificed a pawn on move 5. The position was very complicated, but at least I got what I wanted. I wanted a fight. After I won that game, obviously I started to care about the tournament again.'

Is that a general problem after the World Championship? That the normal challenges may feel a bit tepid. That you want something more.
'I don't know, because before the tournament I was very motivated to do well here. And the first two games were very good, I thought. Most of the third game was also good. I had a very promising endgame against Karjakin. I don't know, I wouldn't call it bad luck, but also my opponents played very well in those games that I lost. Caruana played quite decidedly after the opening and put a lot of pressure on me. I decided to challenge Radjabov in the King's Indian. Just to play a complicated position, and I knew it could go wrong. At some point he both judged the position better than me and played it better than me, so what more can you do?'

Before you came here you had a training and relaxation session in Oman. Is that essential after a period of inactivity when you are going to play again? To get yourself into playing mode? To have this transition and then there is the fight?
'Yeah, absolutely. I feel like every tournament should be an event, it should be something I look forward to. And that was what it really was here at the start. But then, yeah, sometimes I get into this self-destructive mode and then everything I have planned before the tournament or anything doesn't matter. Then I came back, and for the second half everything was normal again.'

From Oman you flew to Baku via Dubai, where due to a logistical error you first were not allowed to board the

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plane. Finally, you left for Baku and when you arrived, your luggage was not there. To what extent does that affect you?
'I forgot about that. It was slightly bothering at first, but then the day of the first round all my stuff was here and then the next day all my clothes were clean, magically, so...'

You had planned to have them laundered here?
'Yeah. I mean, that was not an issue for me.'

Do you mean to say that this is the kind of detail that is not going to affect you?
'Yeah. I mean, losing games, playing badly, that upsets me, but such things don't upset me, unless everything else is already going wrong. At that point I was eager to get the tournament started, and at the start I was doing well, so then everything is fine.'

Do you take it out on people when things go wrong?
'No. Actually I was more indifferent than just angry and pissed. That was the way I thought I was acting, at least. There was some anger in me as the football game showed, but it's actually more dangerous when I am in a sort of indifferent mood. When it's like, yeah, I lost another game, it sucks, but what can you do? It should be something that I lose sleep over (smiles).'

After you won your first two games it didn't take long before people started to calculate what score you needed to get your rating to 2900. Do you have a plan at the back of your mind about how you're going to do that?
'To be honest, at the start, when I won my first two games and when I was much better in the third one, at that point I didn't think about what score I needed. It just seemed to me that there was no reason to give up half a point in any game (laughs). In the second half I won the first game and then I thought, why not score five from five in the second half instead?'

You're very serious about what you're doing, no matter what impression people may sometimes get from the way you're sitting at the board or whatever. But don't you occasionally look at yourself and smile when you think things like let's go for 5 out of 5?
'(Smiles) No, I was dead serious about that. The plan is just to play well, win all my games.'

All. That's the plan.
'Yeah (Softly, as if he feels it's unnecessary to repeat this). I mean, that's never, at least probably, going to work out ever, but I think it's not a bad mind-set. Not thinking about how I am going to draw this game.'

This is the way you look at openings with Peter Heine before the game. As long as there is play...
'But even if there is not, like with the position I had with Hikaru in the first round. It seems like I am almost about the only person who believes that I have any sort of significant advantage. You know, I don't care, as long as the position is there, I will try and do my best. I don't really care if I am better or worse. Well, I care, but I try to play.'

In yesterday's game against Radjabov you kept having hopes till far into the endgame that there might be some opportunity...
'Yes, I thought, there is very little chance that some sacrifice might work or that at some point I might provoke a weakening, a slight concession on the kingside. My thought process is basically that I will be able to agree to a draw in such positions when I am 40 or 50, but that right now I should try and find every little chance there is. And as long as there is no risk and there is a two per cent chance of winning, I think it's worth two hours of extra effort.'

EVGENY ATAROV

Giving it all. Apparently misled by Faik Gasanov's youthful actions, Magnus Carlsen temporarily forgot the chief-arbiter's real age (73).

'There was some anger in me as the football game showed, but it's actually more dangerous when I am in a sort of indifferent mood.'

You say that every tournament has to be an event...
'Every game should be an event as well.'

Essentially, you are still very much doing the same things you have always done. You like to watch sports, to do sports yourself. Has nothing changed except for the fact that you're doing it in more luxurious surroundings?
'(Smiles) Yeah, probably. I think I watched too much sports and, well, TV in general, here. That's perhaps one of the reasons why I was feeling a bit indifferent, a little sluggish in the middle. But then, what can you do when there is a football match going on every night, the NBA play-offs are here, Peter Heine also has some TV series, and in general there is not that much to do here?'

Are there areas in which you feel you might branch out a bit or broaden your interests?
'Yeah, I mean, I was reading Genna Sosonko's book, *The World Champions I Knew*. I liked his article on Tal. My impression was that during tournaments Tal liked to read all the time, occasionally play some different games, and also, of course, his main hobby was to drink and play blitz. Maybe that is something I should consider doing more of during tournaments. But especially the reading part I think is a very healthy thing to do during tournaments. I did read a bit most days; the book was on my bedside, but it didn't help me sleep (laughs).'

Because you kept thinking about it?
'No, the last few days I just suffered from insomnia.'

It's very thoughtful that you didn't mention Tal's womanizing...
'Yeah, that's maybe also something I should consider during tournaments. I do that in between tournaments, so that's fine.'

He looks pleased that he's confused me with his last answer, which came without thinking and in a matter-of-fact tone. This is the kind of play he likes. He may be open and cooperative, but in the end it is he who is in control of the game, deciding what he is going to show and what he is going to keep to himself.

At that point Henrik Carlsen comes in to tell us that our time is up. But one last question is fine. As the day that we talk is the last day that bids for his World Championship match against Vishy Anand can be made, I wonder if the uncertainty about the bids bothered him during the tournament. Again Magnus is pleased. 'No, I didn't think much about it and besides I have been instructed not to talk about this.' And with a satisfied grin he adds: 'Nothing I can do.' ■

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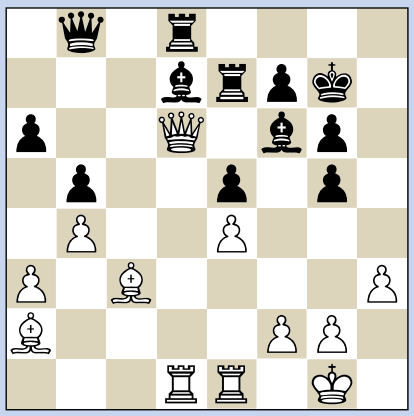
Yochanan Afek

Beware: Brilliancy!

Oversights are part of the practice of each and everyone of us. In all six positions below, culled from grandmaster games, stronger continuations were at hand. Tip: it's always the same key piece that does the trick.

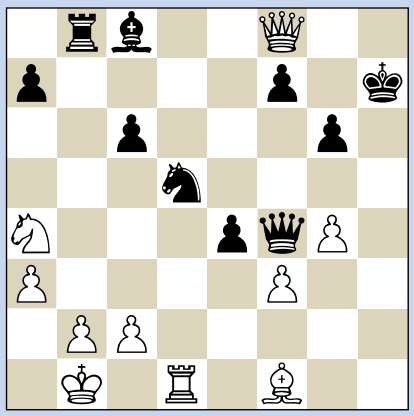
★☆☆☆☆



1. White to play

White grabbed a pawn, **36.♕xa6?**, but had to defend an inferior ending after **36...♖c8! 37.♖d6 ♖xc3 38.♖xf6 ♗e6! 39.♖xe6 fxe6 40.♖d1 ♕b7 41.♕xb7 ♖xb7 42.♗xe6 ♖xa3** What did he miss?

★★☆☆☆



2. White to play

White tried to mate the naked opponent king starting with **24.♗g2?** but had to throw in the towel after **24...♗xg4! 25.♖h1+ ♗h5** Can you improve on his attempt?

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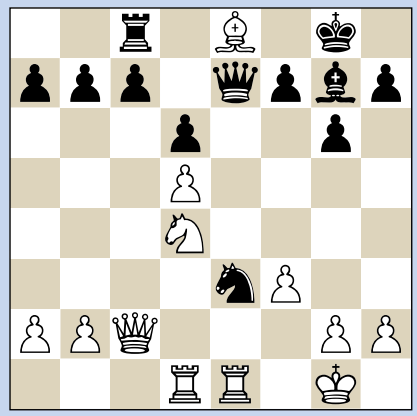

3. Black to play

Black played **18...♖xe8?** and escaped after **19.♕d2 ♗h6 20.♘c2 f5 21.♕d3?! f4 22.♘xe3 fxe3** But 21.♕d4! would have posed big problems. Did Black have a safer option in the diagrammed position?

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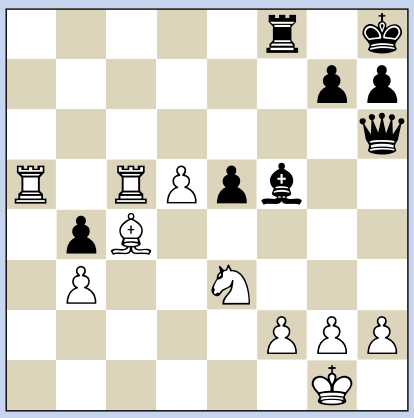
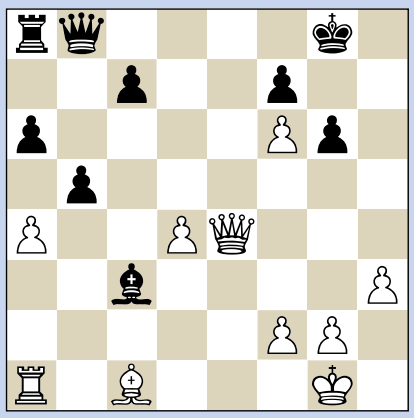


4. Black to play

The game saw **28...♗e4? 29.♖a2 ♕b6 30.♖b5 ♕g6 31.♖d2 ♕a6 32.d6 ♕a1+ 33.♘f1 ♗c6? 34.d7 ♗xd7??** and Black duly collapsed within another hopeless 20 moves. In fact he missed a golden opportunity to play for a win.

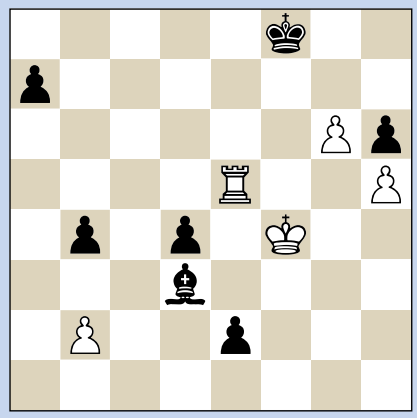
★★★★☆



5. White to play

White's most natural reaction **31.♖b1?** enabled his opponent to regroup: **31...♕e8 32.♕h4 ♖d8 33.♗h6 ♖xd4 34.g4 ♕d8 35.♗g7 ♖d1+ 36.♖xd1 ♕xd1+ 37.♔g2 ♕d5+** and a draw was agreed. Was there a less natural but way more effective alternative?

★★★★★



6. Black to play

Black started his pawn race with **48...a5? 49.♔f3 a4 50.♔f2 a3 51.bxa3 b3** but he was too slow: **52.g7+! ♔xg7 53.♖e7+ ♔f6 54.♖b7 ♗c4 55.♖b4 ♗f7 56.a4 d3 57.a5 ♗xh5 58.♔e1 ♔e5 59.a6!** and White eventually won. What could Black have played?

The number of stars roughly indicates their estimated level of difficulty: 1 is easiest and 5 most difficult. Solutions on page 95

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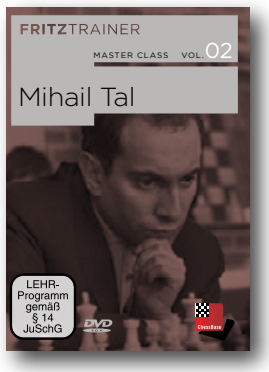
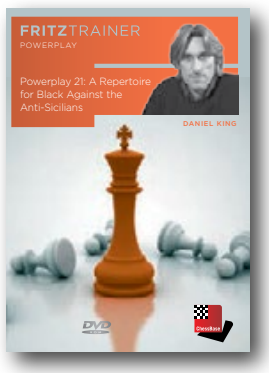
Master Class Vol. 2: Mihail Tal



No World Champion has enchanted the chess world as much as Mihail Tal did. His reign as World Champion was short but in his time Tal's star burned with unknown intensity. With his combinations and his intuitive sacrifices the young Tal ran over his opponents, and thrilled the chess world with his risky uncompromising attacking play, which inspired many players to emulate him. On this DVD Dorian Rogozenco, Mihail Marin, Oliver Reeh and Karsten Müller present the 8. World Chess Champion in video lessons: his openings, his understanding of chess strategy, his artful endgame play, and finally his immortal combinations. In an interactive test they invite you to try to find combinations like Tal did. The DVD also contains all games by Tal, many of them annotated, plus comments and tournament tables.

29,90 €

Daniel King: Powerplay 21 - Repertoire for Black against the Anti-Sicilians



Accept the Morra Gambit with confidence. Tame the Grand Prix Attack. Put fear into the heart of every tedious 2 c3 player. You can make 1...c5 a dangerous weapon whether it's an open or closed Sicilian. If you are ready with your favourite Sicilian variation – perhaps the Najdorf or the Dragon – it can be frustrating if your opponent declines to open the position with 3 d4. That's what this DVD tackles. After studying this DVD you will have a repertoire of reliable lines at your finger tips against all the major Anti-Sicilians such aus 2.c3, Rossolimo (3.Bb5), the Morra Gambit, the Grand Prix Attack, the Closed Sicilian and other systems.

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Mihail Marin: Winning against the Grünfeld

The Grünfeld is a highly dynamic opening in which Black's position often seems to hang together by a single thread; and yet, this apparently precarious equilibrium appears to be enough to make it entirely viable - up to the highest level. When facing the Grünfeld with White, one frequently has the frustrating impression that Black is always able to slip away – trying to win is like trying to catch a fish with your bare hands. This complete repertoire for White, starting with 1.d4 Nf6 2.c4 g6 3.Nc3 d5 4.cxd5 Nxd5 5.e4 Nxc3 6.bxc3 c5 7.Nf3 Bg7 8.Be3, is based on the classical belief that a strong centre guarantees long-term pressure. I have aimed to make use of the most valuable ideas introduced by the world's main specialists (above all Kramnik) and have come up with new ideas and concrete lines in those cases when White has come to a dead end in current theory. In doing so, I have not spared any effort in finding possible improvements for Black, as well as the corresponding antidotes, in an attempt to anticipate the theory's evolution. In modern chess, it is important to retain opening flexibility. For this reason, I have developed two parallel repertoires based on slightly different move orders. In each case I have explained the pros and cons, and offer my subjective preference for one of them. The DVD also comes with a ChessBase file that includes all the relevant games, complete with full analysis.

29,90 €

Mihail Marin: Power Strategy 1

In chess, like in real life, one frequently faces temptations: to grab a pawn, to occupy an open file, to start a kingside attack and so on. There is nothing fundamentally wrong with all these ideas, but before undertaking such concrete actions, one should be sure the position is ripe for it. Chess is so complicated that making the right choice on the basis of calculation alone is not always possible. This is when general rules and principles come into play to to help us distinguish between what we would like to do – and what we should do. In other words, it is a matter of establishing the right order of priorities. This series of DVDs aims to demonstrate the importance of taking proven principles into account before choosing the direction of your over-the-board calculations. The first DVD deals with the initial phase of the game, when the all the reigning principles can be crystalized into just one: DEVELOPMENT! Deviating from the natural course of development for the sake of some illusory advantages is likely to lead one to the same fate as that of those sailors who fell under the syrens' spell – ruin. After having watched the lessons on the right way to navigate from the opening to the middlegame, viewers are invited to test their skills with a host of quiz videos.

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Fair & Square

Vladimir Kramnik: 'In fact I am quite surprised that I managed to achieve quite a lot in chess, because I am not a sportsman inside. I don't care so much about competing, I don't care about being the best (...) I am really an artist in my attitude.'
(In an interview with Brazilian film maker Clara Cavour)

Peter Leko: 'I cried after every game.'
(In an Oslo lecture on losing all his games when he played in his first tournament, aged 9)

David Bronstein: 'A child cannot arrive home with a zero. This is not good, it is cruel. One should give three points for a win, two for a draw, and one point... for playing! Then a boy will rush home and shout: "Granddad, granddad, I scored a point." '
(In his book Secret Notes)

Justin Bieber: 'I don't know if people know this but I am pretty good at chess. I was always on the chess team at school when I was younger.'

Luke McShane: 'Chess is a game sufficiently rich in meaning that it is easily capable of containing elements of both tragedy and comedy.'

Magnus Carlsen: 'Josh didn't have enough of a killer instinct to be successful at chess. That's probably why he switched to something more peaceful.'
(When asked why Josh 'Searching for Bobby Fischer' Waitzkin gave up chess for martial arts)

Tony Miles: 'Perhaps the most important trait a player needs is a warped sense of humour.'

Ellen Carlsen: 'The only negative thing about being the sister of the World Champion, is that I get questions about why I suck at chess.'

Alexander Grischuk: 'People are inclined to look for some supernatural explanation, although the simplest explanation is also the most appropriate: the guy simply plays chess well.'
(In an interview on RSport.ru, when asked why Magnus Carlsen dominates)

W.C.Fields: 'Ultimately chess is just chess – not the best thing in the world and not the worst thing in the world, but there is nothing quite like it.'

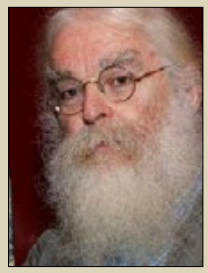
Arnon Grunberg: 'Academic philosophy loves chess problems, but fears the chess board.'

Gregor Piatigorsky: 'Those who know the marvels of chess and wonder why this game of all games does not enjoy greater popularity may also ask why Pepsi-Cola is consumed by more people than Château Lafite, or the Beatles are more familiar than Beethoven.'

Professor Arpad Elo: 'The process of rating players can be compared to the measurement of the position of a cork bobbing up and down on the surface of agitated water with a yard stick tied to a rope and which is swaying in the wind.'

Murray Chandler: 'Chess is not that hard to play. It's hard to play well.'
(On the official opening of his New Zealand National Chess Centre)

Levon Aronian: 'Some girls giggle when they see us on the streets and some even give me presents. Most of us are just regular nerds, so it's quite a lot to get used to. I've changed the way I dress for photo shoots but that's all.'
(In The Wall Street Journal)



Irving Finkel: 'When you look at them, kneel down or crouch in such a way that you can look through the glass straight into their faces and look them in the eye, you will see human beings across the passage of time. They have remarkable quality. They speak to you.'
(The British Museum curator on the Isle of Lewis Chess Pieces)

Bent Larsen: 'Botvinnik has never had a very high respect for my play. One of the reasons is that he thinks I play too many different openings, and that I don't concentrate enough on one or two openings like he did when he was younger.'

Mikhail Tal: 'To play for a draw, at any rate with White, is to some degree a crime against chess.'

Robert Hübner: 'Those who say they understand chess, understand nothing.'

Sochi

Russian ace leads Malachite to title and shoots up to third place in world rankings

Alexander Grischuk rises from the stove

This year's Russian Team Championship reached a new low, with only 13 men's teams and 4(!) women's teams taking part. Traditionally held on the shores of the Black Sea, the event has steadily been losing sponsors and appeal since the economic crisis of 2008. Nevertheless a dozen of 2700 players travelled to Sochi, five of them representing the Elo favourites and new champions Malachite from Yekaterinburg. **Vladimir Barsky** reports.

In contrast to Western Europe, in modern Russia the club movement is poorly developed. Those who come to the team championship are players who have group meetings only once or twice a year. These groups are set up by local enthusiasts: if they manage to find a sponsor, there is a team, if not, then alas... For two years Tomsk 400, twice winners of the European Club Cup, have not come to the championship. The regional administration has changed, and the new governor is not interested in chess. The no less successful Economist team from Saratov depended on money from the local university. A change of rector occurred and the team disappeared. And literally a day before the start of this year's championship, the club from Rostov-on-Don suddenly pulled out, just like in the bad old 1990s...

In the last decade the championships have traditionally been held on the Black Sea coast. The start of the holiday season is still a long way off, and prices in guest houses are very reasonable. In the men's competition each team has six main players and two reserves, and in the women's it is four plus one. It would appear that the expenses for a team are not so great. Travel, board and lodging, plus the entry fee come to roughly 7-8 thousand Euros. Yes, the leading clubs pay quite good fees to the grandmasters, and then the expenditure increases significantly. But what will be the outlay for a sponsor? Our sports papers are dominated by football, there is a little on ice-hockey and basketball, and other types of sport are largely neglected. The prize-fund was not very big: six thousand Euros for the

team finishing first, four thousand for second and two thousand for third. But nowadays everyone has begun counting money, and no one is throwing it about.

Nevertheless, despite all the problems, there was an imposing line-up including two participants from the Candidates' Tournament – Sergey Karjakin and Peter Svidler, plus another ten 2700 players: Alexander Grischuk, Nikita Vitiugov, Ian Nepomniachtchi, Dmitry Jakovenko and Alexander Morozevich (all –

VLADIMIR BARSKY

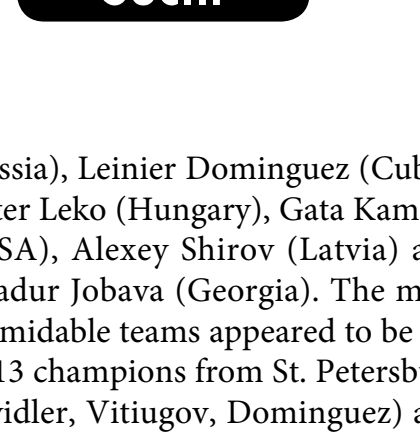
Alexander Grischuk explained his fine result by referring to the fairy-tale of Ivan the Fool, who lay on the stove till he was 33 years old, and when he stood up turned out to be a Hercules. 'Unfortunately, I have rarely been able to lie on a stove, but now I have been able to do this for three months.'

Russia), Leinier Dominguez (Cuba), Peter Leko (Hungary), Gata Kamsky (USA), Alexey Shirov (Latvia) and Baadur Jobava (Georgia). The most formidable teams appeared to be the 2013 champions from St. Petersburg (Svidler, Vitiugov, Dominguez) and the Elo favourites Malachite from Yekaterinburg (Karjakin, Grischuk, Leko).

At the start Malachite scored a 6-0 whitewash against a solid, middle-ranking team – Zhiguli from Tolyatti. In this match a fine win was gained by the leader of the Urals team, Sergey Karjakin. The notes are partly based on his comments immediately after the game.

NI 24.3 – E12
Sanan Sjugirov
Sergey Karjakin
Sochi 2014 (1)

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 e6 3.♘f3 b6 4.♘c3 ♗b4 5.♕c2 ♗b7 6.♗g5



S.K.: 'There is a story behind this game. When I arrived at the Candidates' Tournament, on the very first day the screen of my laptop broke down. I bought a new laptop, got everything working, and took it to Sochi, but I didn't have time to copy my analyses onto it. I tried joining up the old computer to the new one, but it didn't work, nor with Sasha Motylev's (his second – ed.). Therefore I was left completely without any of my analyses. I knew that Sjugirov had already played the variation with 5.♕c2 and 6.♗g5, and I remembered that Black should be fine here, but how precisely I had forgotten. However, I reassured myself: he is unlikely to play this, since he will decide that I will be well prepared for it. But it transpired that I did not repeat anything, because I was not able to!'

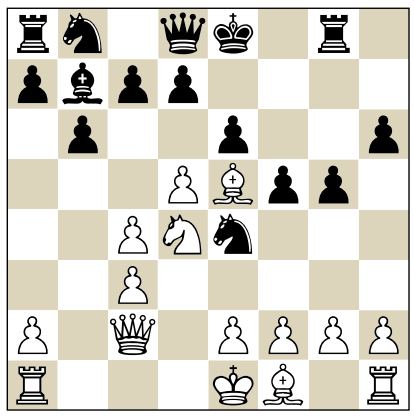
'I tried joining up the old computer to the new one, but it didn't work. Therefore I was left completely without any of my analyses.'

6...h6 7.♗h4 g5 8.♗g3 ♘e4 9.♗e5

9...♗xc3+

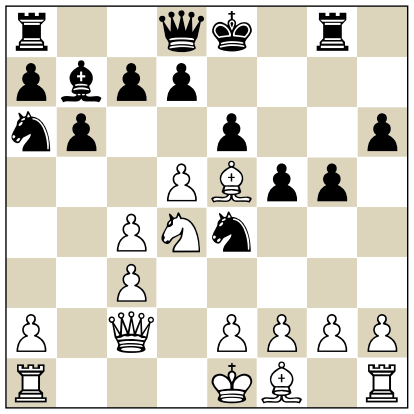
This is how the game mentioned by Sergey developed: 9...f6 10.d5 fxe5 11.♕xe4 ♕f6 12.h4 g4 13.♘xe5 ♖g8 14.♖c1 with advantage to White, Sjugirov-Krivoruchko, Plovdiv 2012.

10.bxc3 ♖g8 11.d5 f5 12.♘d4



12...♘a6

S.K.: 'To be honest, I am not sure about the move 12...♘a6, since after the most critical reply 13.f3 ♘ec5 14.dxe6 dxe6 15.g4 the position is unclear. But after 13.dxe6?! d6 I am already slightly better. Later I had an enormous advantage, but I probably sold it too cheaply with 32...f4. Although, perhaps, I also shouldn't have played 30...h5, since after the simple 30...♔d8 it is hard for White to find a move. In the end I reached a position where I was the exchange up, but it was not so clear.'

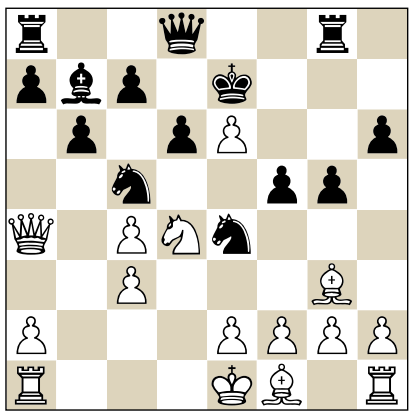


13.dxe6

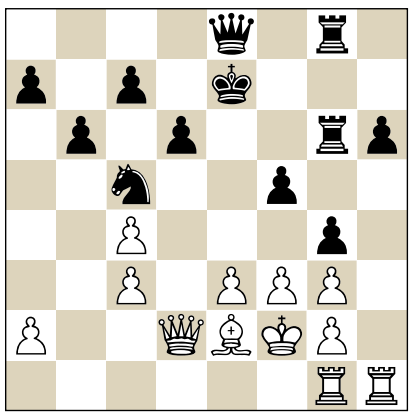
In a blitz game Dreev-Ivanchuk, Moscow 2007, Black quickly gained an overwhelming position after 13.g4 ♕e7 14.♗g2 exd5 15.f4 gxf4 16.♗xf4 ♕h4+.

Karjakin's suggestion is undoubtedly stronger: 13.f3 ♘ec5 14.dxe6 dxe6 (here 14...d6? does not work because of 15.♕xf5 with the threat of mate on f7). True, if 15.g4 there is the clever resource 15...♘d7!, but White can simply play 15.♖d1, retaining a slight initiative.

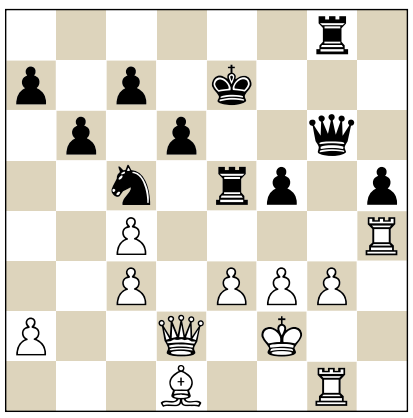
13...d6! 14.♕a4+ ♔e7 15.♗g3 ♘ac5



16.♘c6+
If 16.♕c2 there is the unpleasant 16...f4. Although Karjakin did not refresh the variations in his memory, he played the opening excellently!
16...♗xc6 17.♕xc6 ♘xe6
The recommendation by Houdini is even stronger: 17...♖g6! 18.♖c1 ♖xe6 19.e3 f4, and White has serious problems.
18.♖c1 ♕d7 19.♕d5 ♖af8 20.f3 ♘xg3
Apparently this exchange loses part of the advantage. 20...♘4c5 21.♗f2 ♕a4 was better, although it is hard to call such play 'human'.
21.hxg3 ♖g6 22.e3 ♕a4 23.♕d2 ♘c5 24.♗e2 g4 25.♔f2 ♖fg8 26.♖cg1 ♕e8
And here 26...♖f8 27.♖h5 ♖ff6 28.♖gh1 ♔d8 was more accurate.



27.♕d5 The queen cannot be maintained on this square. White could have made things much harder for his opponent with 27.♖h5 ♖f6 28.♖gh1 ♕f8 29.♗d3.
27...♖e6 28.♖h4 ♖e5 29.♕d4 ♕g6 30.♕d2 h5 31.♗d1 gxf3 32.gxf3

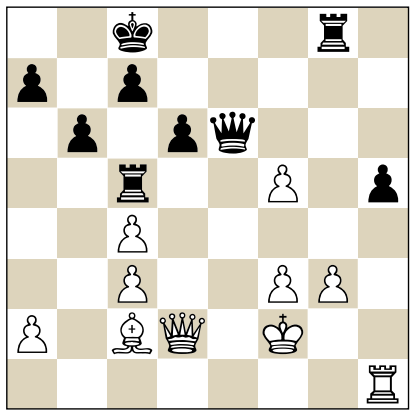


32...f4!

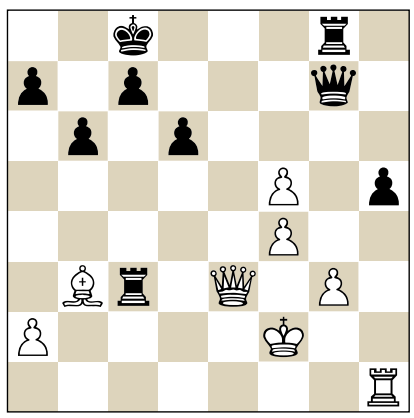
VLADIMIR BARSKY

Sergey Karjakin shakes hands with Sanan Sjugirov at the start of Malachite's whitewash against Zhiguli from Tolyatti. With a determined look the Black player tries to conceal that computer problems had prevented him from repeating a crucial variation before the game.

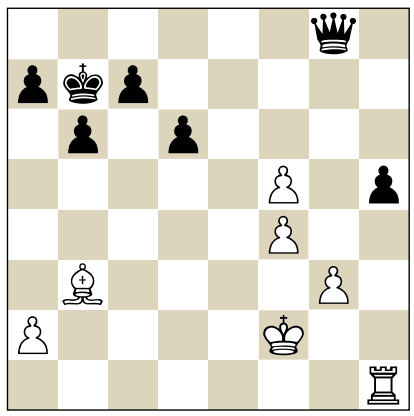
Sergey considered this move to be an inaccuracy, although the computer does not agree with this assessment. However, now the position becomes extremely concrete, and the players can expect some serious calculating work.
33.♖xf4 Sacrificing the queen does not help: after 33.exf4 ♘d3+ 34.♕xd3 ♕xd3 35.fxe5 ♕xc3 36.exd6+ ♔xd6 Black should be able to convert his material advantage.
33...♘d3+ 34.♔f1 ♘xf4 35.exf4 ♖c5 36.♔f2 ♔d8 37.♗c2 ♕e6 38.♖h1 ♔c8 39.f5



39...♕e5!
S.K.: 'I thought for a very long time about the simple 39...♖xf5 40.♗xf5 ♕xf5, but here it should be a draw. And I was able to find the very strong idea with 39...♕e5!. It appears that White should be able to find something, but I did not see any saving possibility for him, although I calculated some very long variations. Of course, Black is playing with the draw in hand, but I finally became convinced about the strength of this continuation when I found the accurate 46th move.'
40.f4 ♕g7 41.♕e3 ♖xc4 42.♗b3 ♖xc3



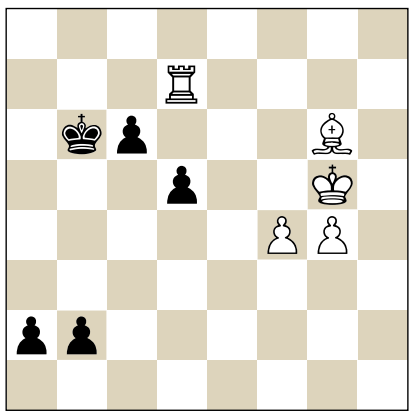
43.♕e6+ If 43.f6 there is the decisive 43...♕xg3+ 44.♕xg3 ♖gxg3 45.f7 ♖cf3+ 46.♔e2 ♖xf4 47.♖xh5 ♖xb3 48.axb3 ♖xf7, and wins.
43...♔b7 44.♕xg8 ♖c2+! 45.♗xc2
White is forced to give up his queen, since 45.♔f1 ♕a1 mate or 45.♔f3 ♕c3+ 46.♔e4 ♖e2+ 47.♔d5 ♕c5 mate, are no real alternatives.
45...♕xg8 46.♗b3



46...♕h8!

S.K. 'Defending the h5-pawn and preventing f5-f6. After this, by combining threats to the enemy king with the advance of his own pawns, Black must gradually win.'

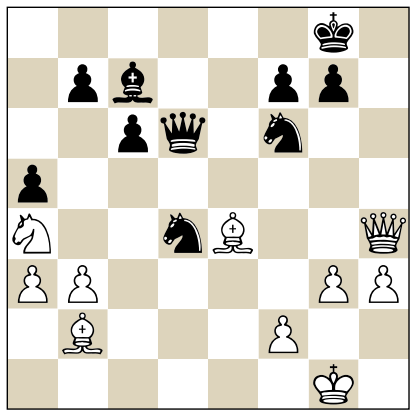
47.♔g2 b5 48.♗f7 ♕b2+ 49.♔h3 ♕f6 50.♗g6 b4 51.♖e1 a5 52.♖e6 ♕a1 53.♔h4 ♕xa2 54.♔xh5 a4 55.♖e4 ♕h2+ 56.♔g4 ♕b2 57.♔g5 d5 58.♖e5 ♕c3 59.g4 a3 60.f6 a2 61.f7 ♕c5 62.♖e8 b3 63.f8♕ ♕xf8 64.♖xf8 b2 65.♖d8 c6 66.♖d7+ ♔b6



White resigned.

S.K.: 'Of course, the final position is a pretty one. I want to promote to a queen on a1, and White cannot advance his f-pawn, since then another queen appears on b1. Although it is also possible to promote to a queen on b1 immediately; in general, a pleasant choice!'

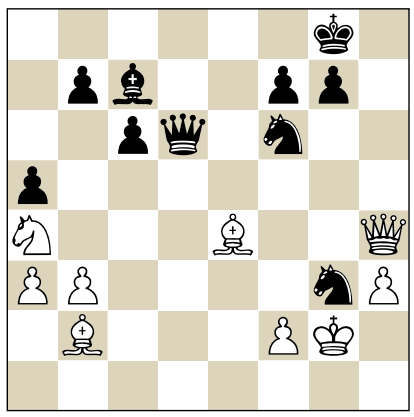
A Swiss tournament with a small number of participants also has its plus points. For example, crunch matches begin as early as the second round. In a bloody battle Malachite overcame the Moscow club Nashe Nasledie (Our Heritage) 4-2.



Boris Grachev – Alexey Shirov
position after 28.♕h4

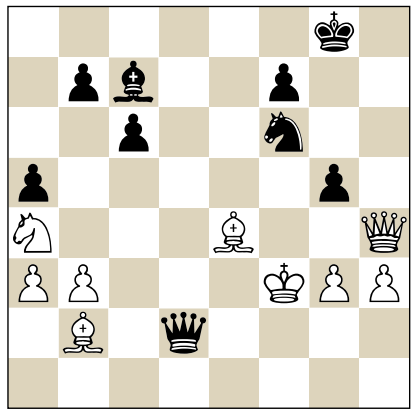
White's knight is out of play, and this causes his downfall.

28...♘e2+ 29.♔g2 ♘xg3!



30.♗xf6

If 30.fxg3 there would have followed 30...♕d2+ 31.♔f3 g5!, and White's queen is trapped!



ANALYSIS DIAGRAM

Now if 32.♕h6 there follows 32...g4+. Therefore he has to give up his bishop.

After 32.♗h7+ ♘xh7 33.♕d4 there is another pretty stroke for Black: 33...g4+! 34.♔xg4 (as 34.hxg4 ♘g5 is mate!, and 34.♕xg4+ ♘g5+ cannot really be called an improvement) 34...♕e2+ 35.♔h4 ♕e7+ 36.♔g4, and here Black has a choice between 36...♕e6+ and 36...♕g5+, in both cases with a strong attack.

30...♘xe4 31.♕xe4 ♕h2+ 32.♔f1 ♕xh3+ 33.♔e2 gxf6

As a result Black is two pawns up, and the white knight is still on the edge of the board.

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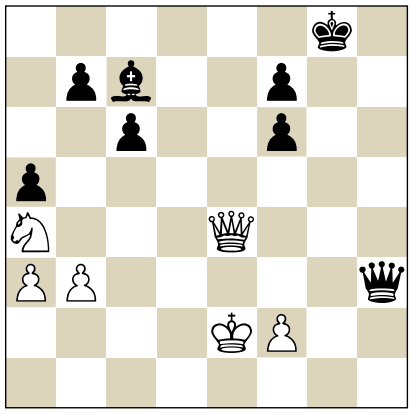
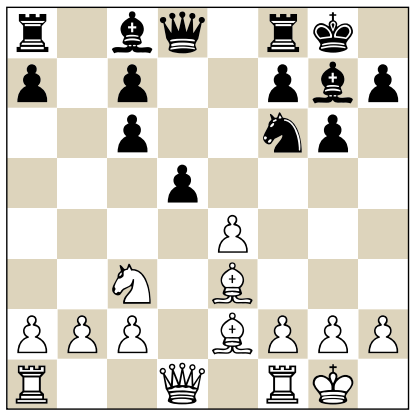


34.b4 axb4 35.axb4 ♗d6 36.♕d4 ♕e6+ 37.♔f1 b5 38.♘c3 ♗e5 39.♕d3 ♕b3 40.♕d8+ ♔g7 41.♘d1 ♕xb4 42.♘e3 ♕b1+ 43.♔e2 ♗f4
White resigned.

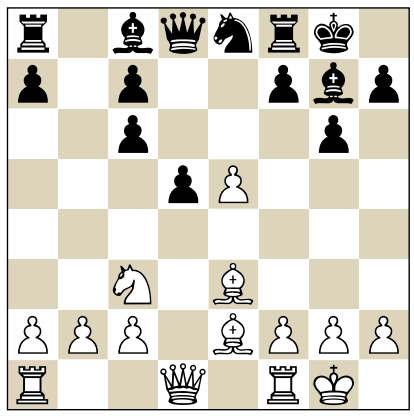
In the third round Malachite defeated St. Petersburg, after which it appeared that the question of the champion was settled – the main rivals had been beaten, and the distance of seven rounds was too short. But the modest University team from Belorechensk in the Krasnodar Region unexpectedly performed the role of disturbers of the peace. The club's feats were inspired by their leader Baadur Jobava, who defeated Jakovenko, Svidler and Kamsky. His wins against Svidler and Kamsky will bring a smile to the face of anyone who hates to study opening theory. In both games Jobava was successful with one of his pet openings, the ultra-modest 1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.♗e2!?. Kamsky was his first victim and I include some of the comments that Jobava made after the game in my notes. Two days later it was Peter Svidler's turn. That game Jobava has annotated himself.

KP 7.4 – C44
Baadur Jobava
Gata Kamsky
Sochi 2014 (3)

1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.♗e2!?
Baadur's 'trademark' move. As he put it: 'I try to take the elite players away from theory, in order that they have to think with their heads. In order that we are on equal terms. If I am destined to lose, at least it will be in an equal battle.'
3...g6 4.d4 exd4 5.♘xd4 ♗g7 6.♗e3 ♘f6 7.♘c3 0-0 8.0-0 d5 9.♘xc6 bxc6



10.e5
B.J.: 'Gata Kamsky responded well in the opening. 3...g6 is what Elena Zayatz played against me recently in Minsk. Against her I played 4.c3, but on this occasion I did not want to repeat myself and I played 4.d4. I think that this move is incorrect, since as a result of forcing play we ended up in an equal position.
I could have played 10.exd5, and after 10...♘xd5 a draw would have immediately resulted. But you know my character – I cannot quickly cut short a game, and so I played 10.e5, aiming for a fight.'
10...♘e8!?
It is obvious that Black is also aiming for a fight. Otherwise he would have chosen 10...♘e4 11.♘xe4 dxe4 12.♕xd8 ♖xd8 13.♖ad1 ♖e8, when a draw is not far off.

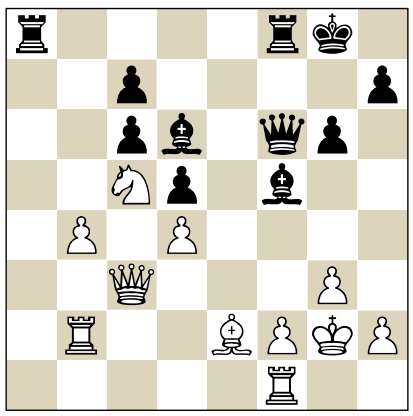


11.♗d4 Houdini thinks that White should have simply won the exchange: 11.♗c5 ♗xe5 12.♗xf8 ♔xf8 13.♕d2 ♕f6 14.♗d3. But from the human point of view here Black has more than sufficient compensation, and his game is easier to play.
B.J.: 'Here I began marking time, making some stupid moves, and I also got into terrible time-trouble – I had just three minutes left, and my position was worse. Gata probably thought that I was bound to collapse, but I began finding the only moves! To my surprise, and apparently also to my opponent's. And he somehow became rattled, and began making not the strongest moves, after which I was able to consolidate. And then he blundered the pawn on c6.'
11...f6 12.exf6 ♗xf6 13.♘a4 ♘g7 14.♘c5 ♖b8 15.♖b1 a5 16.c3 ♗e7 17.b4 ♗d6 18.♕d2 ♘f5 19.a3 axb4 20.axb4 ♘xd4 21.

VLADIMIR BARSKY

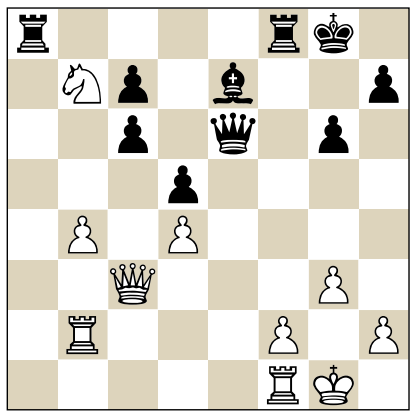
Baadur Jobava, the excelling first board of the modest University team from Belorechensk, has a friendly chat with Alexanders Grischuk and Riazantsev. 'After 1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘c6, I go 3.♗e2. Wanna try?'

cxd4 ♕f6 22.♕c3 ♖a8 23.♖b2 ♕f4 24.g3 ♕f6 25.♔g2 ♗f5
In the computer's opinion the two players conducted this part of the game at a fairly high standard, and nowhere did the evaluation vary far from approximate equality. Possibly Jobava underestimated his position, whereas Kamsky, by contrast, overestimated his. Black's last move is overoptimistic: he should probably have exchanged on c5 and played his rook to a4, with a roughly equal game. Now, however, the initiative passes to White.

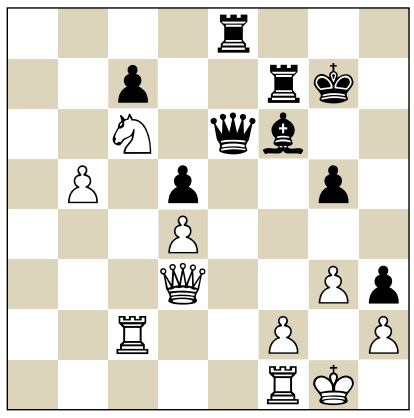


26.♘b7!
B.J.: 'My opponent most probably underestimated this manoeuvre. After 26.♘b7! White now has a normal game, since if necessary he can exchange the terrible bishop on d6. I think that this position is already close to equal, but by inertia Gata continued playing for a win, since I had just two or three minutes left. If I had had an hour in reserve, he would probably have played differently. It is useful to play like this – in the style of Grischuk, to provoke the enemy fire! Of course, I did not do this deliberately, but because my situation was not very good. Later, now in a mutual time scramble, Black blundered once again and was forced to go into an endgame where he had a difficult position.'
26...♕e6 27.♔g1 ♗h3 28.♖c1 ♗e7 29.♗f1
The immediate 29.♘a5 was stronger, but in time-trouble it is hard to decide on such a move – one wants first to safeguard the king.
29...♗xf1 30.♖xf1

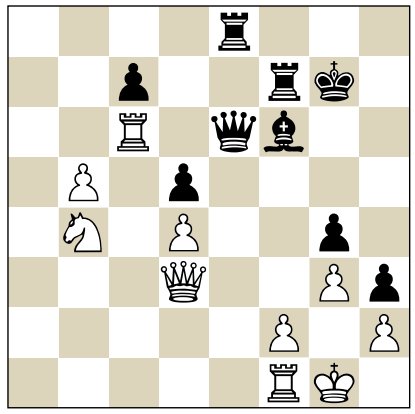
Baadur Jobava won two games starting with 1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.♗e2!?. 'I quite often employ the Philidor Defence, so why not play it with an extra tempo?'



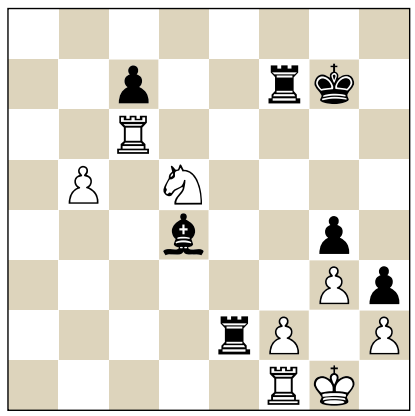
30...♗f6? This move is the first serious mistake in the game, the blunder of the c6-pawn which Baadur mentioned. After 30...♖a4 31.♖e1 ♕f6 the chances would have remained roughly equal.
31.♘a5! ♖ae8 32.♘xc6 h5 33.b5 h4 34.♕d3 ♔g7 35.♖c2 ♖f7 36.♔g2 h3+ 37.♔g1 g5



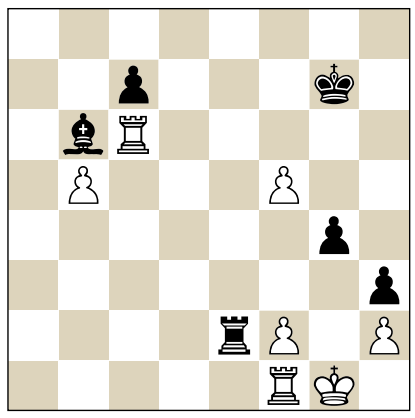
38.♘b4 The cool prophylactic move 38.♖d1! is again not one for time-trouble: a normal human is afraid of blundering into check and mate on e1.
38...g4 Black could have made things more difficult with 38...♕e4! 39.♕xe4 ♖xe4 40.♘xd5 ♗xd4 41.♘xc7 ♗xf2+ 42.♖cxf2 ♖xc7.
39.♖c6



39...♕e2? Another oversight, after which Black's position becomes hopeless. Here also the queens should have been exchanged on e4: 39...♕e4 40.♕xe4 ♖xe4 41.♘xd5 ♗xd4 with drawing chances.
40.♕xe2 ♖xe2 41.♘xd5 ♗xd4



42.♘f4!
The rook is attacked, and a check on e6 is threatened. Black is forced to give up the exchange.
42...♖xf4 43.gxf4 ♗b6 44.f5
Jobava begins playing for mate.



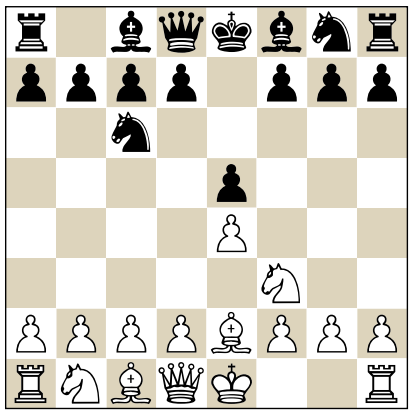
44...♖e4 45.♖d1 ♖b4 46.♔f1 ♔f7 47.♖d7+ ♔e8 48.♖h7 ♔d8 49.♖g6 ♔c8 50.f6 ♖f4 51.f7 ♔b7 52.♖g8 ♗c5 53.♖hh8
Black resigned.

NOTES BY
Baadur Jobava

RG 8.7 – C44
Baadur Jobava
Peter Svidler
Sochi 2014 (5)

First of all, I wish to express my condolences to the relatives and friends of Vugar Gashimov, a wonderful man and a talented grandmaster, who departed this life prematurely. Rest in peace, Vugar!

1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.♗e2!?

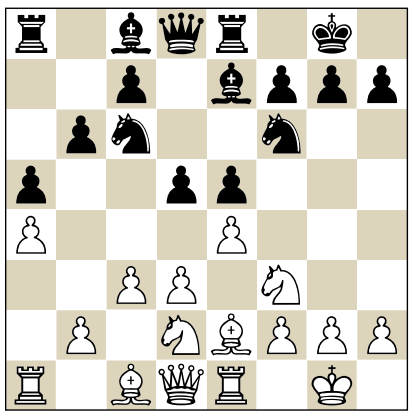


I quite often employ the Philidor Defence as Black, with reasonable results, at least on emerging from the opening, so why not play it with an extra tempo?

3...♘f6 3...g6 has twice been played against me, but it is clear that the natural development of the knight at f6 is no worse.

4.d3 d5 5.♘bd2 ♗e7 6.c3 a5 7.a4 Preventing just in case the further advance of the rook's pawn, and simultaneously taking control of the important b5-square in the future.

7...0-0 8.0-0 ♖e8 9.♖e1 b6

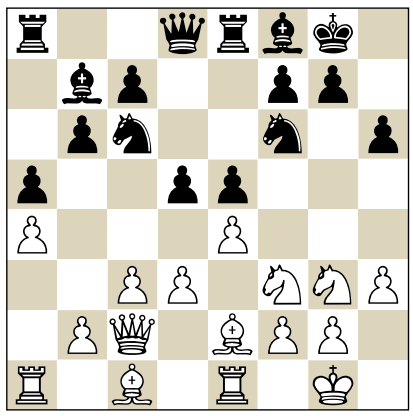


One of the possible development plans, which also has its drawbacks. For example, control of the g4-f5 squares is lost and, as becomes clear in the near future, after the advance of the c-pawn the b6-point is weakened.

10.♕c2

I have my maxim in this opening: on no account concede the centre (exd5), unless it gives concrete dividends. And, since White must somehow develop his queenside, this set-up seems the most expedient.

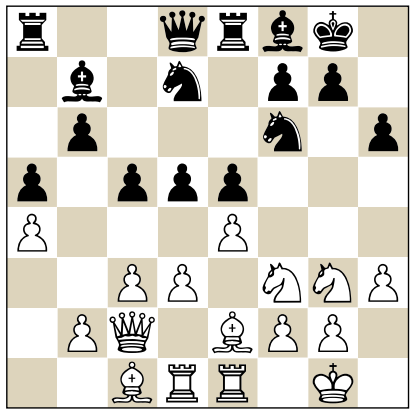
10...♗b7 11.♘f1 h6 12.♘g3 ♗f8 13.h3



Just in case, White safeguards himself against attacks by the black knight, at the same time hinting at the possible manoeuvre ♘f3-h2-g4, as in the Ruy Lopez.

13...♘b8 For both sides the position is not an easy one to play. There are no clear guidelines as to how to continue. Peter decides to seize space in the centre, but this has its drawbacks, as mentioned earlier.

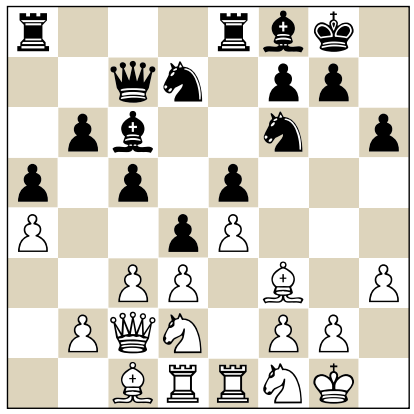
14.♗e3 c5 15.♖ad1 ♘bd7 16.♗c1



White has completed his development, with his forces harmoniously deployed, and he is fully ready for any activity on Black's part. A close examination shows that the position strongly resembles King's Indian set-ups, with two very important nuances: the weakness of the c4-b5 points and the unfortunate position of the knight on d7 (d2). Its lawful place is at c6 (c3).

16...♕c7 17.♘d2 ♗c6 18.♗f3 d4 If 18...♖ad8 there is the unpleasant 19.♘f5 g6 20.♘e3 d4 21.♘ec4 (21.♘d5!?).

19.♘gf1 19.♘c4 was more accurate.



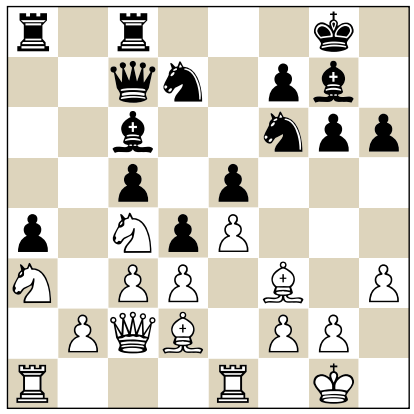
19...g6

An interesting try was 19...b5!? 20.axb5 ♗xb5. Peter made this exchange three moves later, thereby allowing White time for the comfortable deployment of his knights.

20.♘c4 ♗g7 21.♘fd2 b5

Otherwise after ♘a3 and ♘dc4 White exerts unpleasant pressure on Black's queenside, in particular on the b6-pawn.

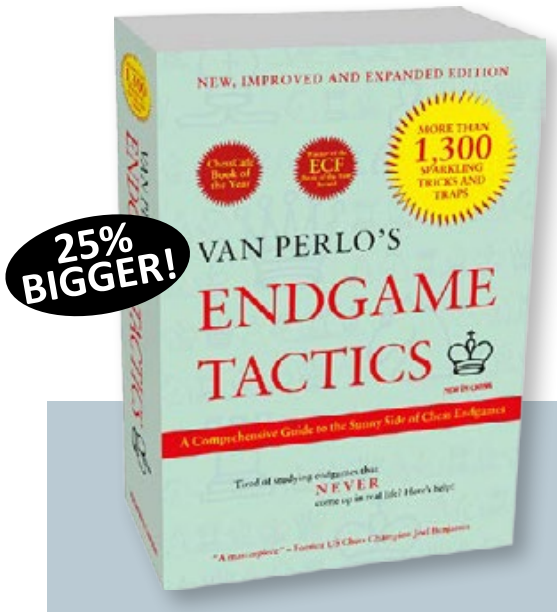
22.axb5 ♗xb5 23.♘a3 ♗c6 24.♘dc4 a4 25.♗d2 ♖ec8 26.♖a1



Just in case taking aim at the a4-pawn.

26...♘f8?!

Black is cramped, and therefore he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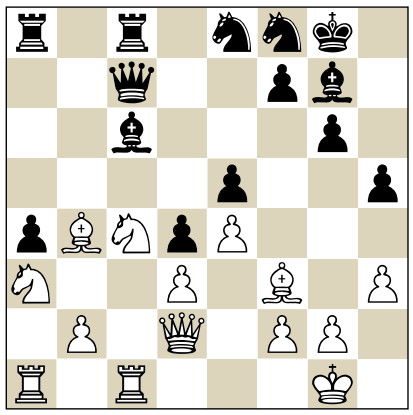
should have freed himself a little by exchanging a pair of knights: 26...♘b6 27.♘xb6 ♕xb6 28.♘c4 ♕c7 29.♖ec1.

27.cxd4 cxd4 28.♗b4 ♘e8 29.♖ec1 h5 30.♕d2



30...♕b8 31.♘a5 ♗d7 32.♖xc8 ♕xc8

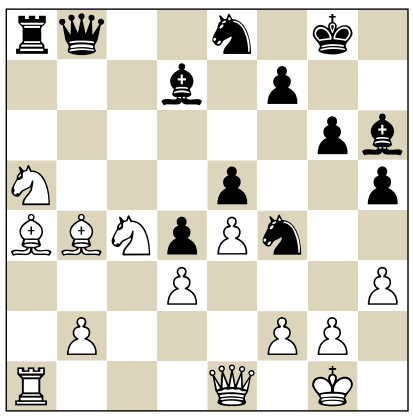
Bad was 32...♗xc8? 33.♘c6 ♕b7 34.♘e7+ ♔h7 35.♘xc8 ♖xc8 36.♘c4.

33.♘3c4 ♕b8

33...♖b8 34.♗d1 ♘e6 35.♗xa4 ♗xa4 36.♖xa4 ♘f4 37.♗a3 followed by an exchange of rooks after ♖b4 with advantage to White.

34.♗d1 ♗h6 35.♕e1 ♘e6 36.♗xa4 ♘f4!

A clever attempt to complicate matters in White's time-trouble.

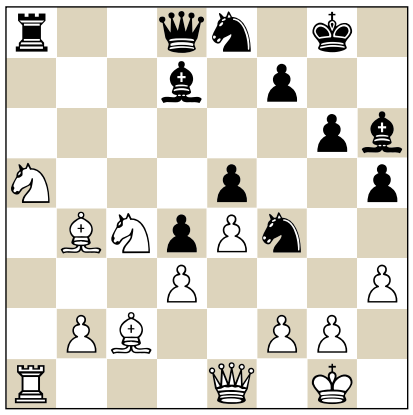


37.♗c2?!

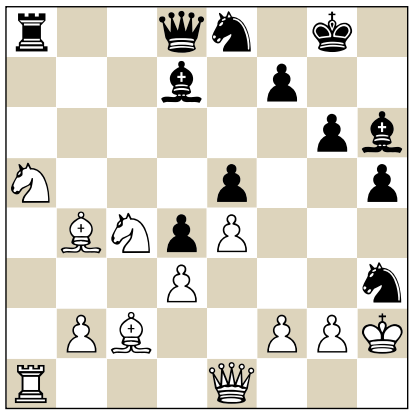
Clearly stronger was 37.♕d1!! (I completely overlooked this move) 37...♕xb4 (37...♗xa4 38.♖xa4, and White is better; 37...♗xh3? 38.♘c6 ♕b7 39.gxh3 and wins) 38.♗xd7 and White is better.

37...♕c8

Missing 37...♕d8!. To be honest I also did not see this move. I am not sure that I would have found my way in this complicated position, even with sufficient time on the clock. Judge for yourself:



A) 38.♔h2 ♘xh3! and now:

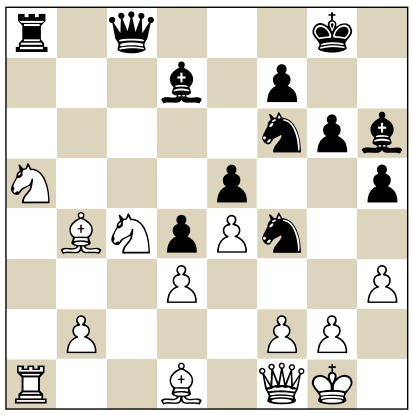


A1) 39.♘c6 ♗f4+! 40.g3 ♕h4! 41.♔g2 ♗xg3! 42.fxg3 ♘f4+ 43.gxf4 ♕h3+ 44.♔g1 ♖xa1 45.♕xa1 ♕g3+ 46.♔f1 ♗h3+ 47.♔e2 ♗g4+ 48.♔d2 ♕f2+ 49.♔c1 ♕f1+ 50.♔d2 ♕xa1, winning;

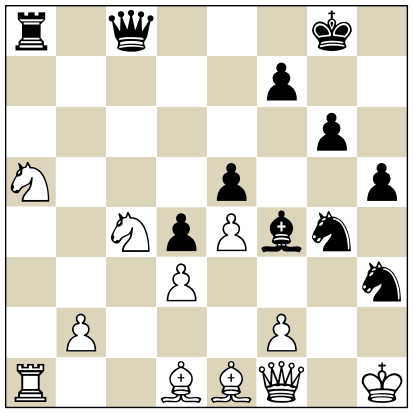
A2) 39.♗d2! ♗f4+ 40.♗xf4 ♘xf4 41.g3 ♕f6! 42.gxf4 ♕xf4+ 43.♔g1 ♕g4+ 44.♔h2 ♕h4+ 45.♔g1 ♗h3 46.♘e3 dxe3 47.♕xe3 ♘c7 48.b4 ♘b5 and Black is slightly better;

B) 38.♗d2! ♕g5 39.g3! ♗xh3 40.♔h2 ♗e6 41.gxf4 ♕h4+ 42.♔g1 ♕g4+ with perpetual check.

38.♕f1! ♘f6 39.♗d1



39...♗xh3
Objectively this sacrifice does not give compensation, but the reasons are clear from the commentary above.
40.gxh3 ♘xh3+ 41.♔h1 ♗f4 42.♗e1 ♘g4



43.b4!
Supporting the outpost at a5 and simultaneously opening the second rank for the rook to defend the kingside.
43...♖a6 44.♖a2 ♖f6 45.♕g2 ♗g5 46.b5 ♗h4 47.♗xg4 hxg4 48.b6
48.♘c6 was even stronger.
48...♖xb6 49.♘xb6 ♕c1 50.♕f1 ♕h6
50...♕b1 51.♖e2 ♕xb6 would have enabled Black to continue resisting.
51.♘d5
Black resigned.

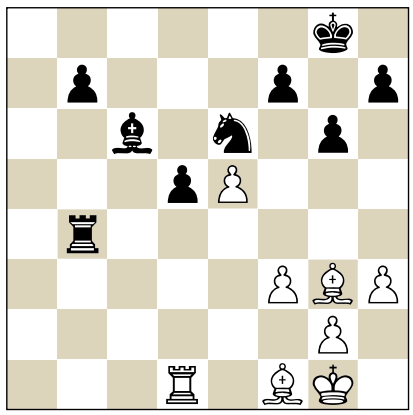
Even so, a miracle did not occur: in the penultimate round University lost to Nashe Nasledie and dropped out of the fight for 'gold'. In the end first place went to Malachite, with Nashe Nasledie second and St. Petersburg third. The fourth and final qualifying place for the European Club Cup went to University.

The absolute best result in the championship was achieved by Alexander Grischuk: on second board he scored 6 points out of 7, gained 15 Elo points and rose to third place in the world rating list. In reply to my question, what had inspired him to such feats, Grischuk replied:

'I have always given Kramnik an example from the fairy-tale, how Ivan the Fool lay on his stove until he was 33 years old, when he stood up – and turned out to be a Hercules! If we were to lie on a stove until we were 33, we also would probably become a Hercules! Unfortunately, I have rarely been able to lie on a stove, but now I have been able to do this for three months.'

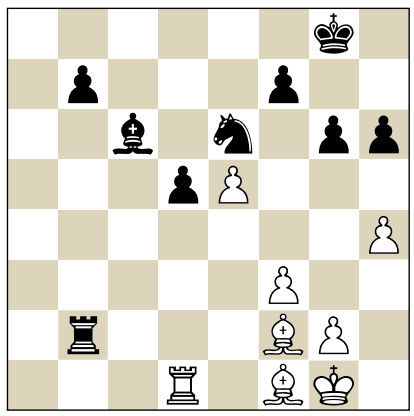
In the second-round match against Nashe Nasledie, Grischuk, in his game against Morozevich, successfully set up a devilish trap. The comments are his.

■ ■ ■



Morozevich-Grischuk
position after 33.f3

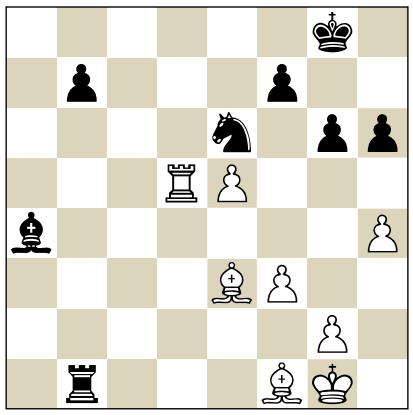
In the preceding play Black won a pawn, but in view of the two white bishops it is not easy for him to convert his advantage. I wanted to exchange the light-squared bishops, but the immediate 33...♗b5? will not do in view of 34.♖xd5, when Black does not have time to play ♖b1 since his bishop is en prise. And if 33...d4 there is the unpleasant 34.♗e1 ♖b2?! 35.♗c4. In searching for a way to win, I was able to set one of the most cunning traps in my career.
33...♖b2!? 34.h4
Alexander made this move very quickly, and I even felt rather upset: was my trap really so obvious? Very well, let's try again...
34...h6 35.♗f2
He fell into it!



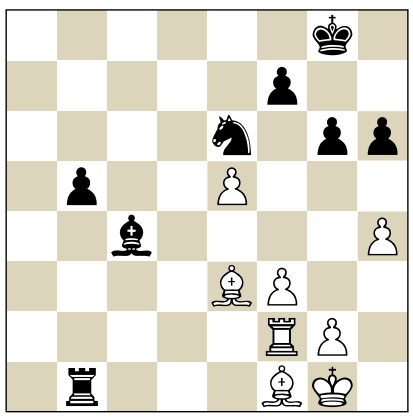
35...♗a4!!
It is interesting that Houdini 4 does not give this as the first line even at depth 30, but as soon as it is made on the board it whole-heartedly approves of it. Now the exchange of bishops is unavoidable.
36.♖xd5?
White should nevertheless have reconciled himself to the exchange, although after 36.♖c1 ♗b5 37.g3 ♗xf1 38.♔xf1 g5 Black's achievements are obvious. Now, however, White loses by force.
36...♖b1 37.♗e3

VLADIMIR BARSKY

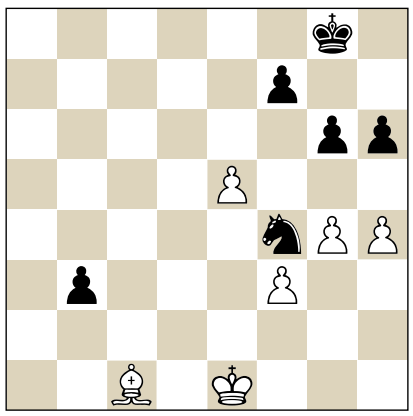
Chess small talk at the highest level. For good friends Peter Svidler and Alexander Grischuk there is always something to discuss.



37...♗b3! Gaining a decisive tempo compared with 37...♗c6 38.♖d2 ♗b5 39.♖f2, when the black bishop hinders its own pawn.
38.♖d2 Everything rests on the variation 38.♖b5 ♖xf1+.
38...♗c4 39.♖f2 b5



40.g4 40.♗xh6 can be answered by either the refined 40...g5 41.hxg5 b4 42.g6 b3, or the simple 40...b4 41.♗d2 b3 42.♗c3 ♘f4.
40...b4 41.♔g2 ♗xf1+ 42.♖xf1 ♖xf1 43.♔xf1 b3 44.♗c1 ♘f4 45.♔e1



45...♘d3+ 46.♔d2 b2 47.♗xb2 ♘xb2 48.♔c3 ♘a4+ 49.♔d4 ♔f8 50.f4 ♔e7 51.f5 gxf5 52.gxf5 f6 53.♔e4 ♘c5+ 54.♔f4 h5
White resigned.

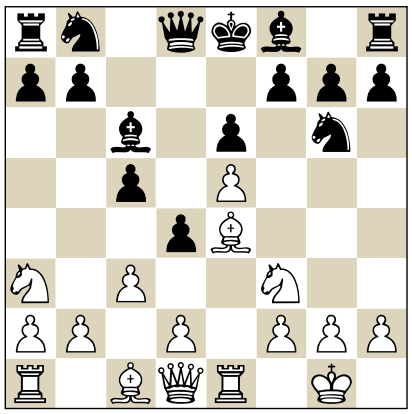
> ‘However, at times strange and highly unpleasant creatures can crawl out of a coffin...’

Grischuk started with three wins. This was his third victory, in the match against St. Petersburg.

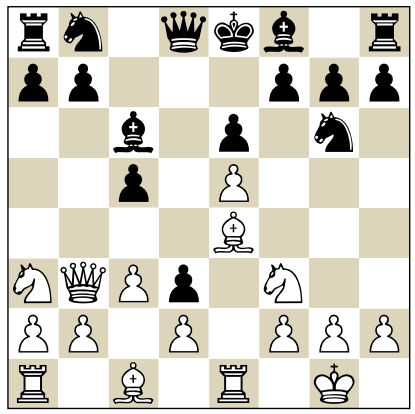
NOTES BY
Alexander Grischuk

SI 46.2 – B40
Alexander Grischuk
Nikita Vitiugov
Sochi 2014 (3)

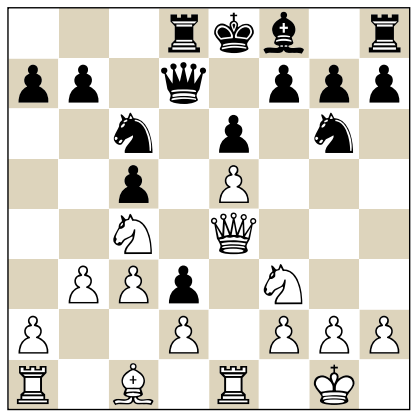
1.e4 c5 2.♘f3 e6 3.c3 d5 4.e5 d4 5.♗d3 ♗d7 6.0-0 ♗c6 7.♘a3 ♘e7 8.♖e1 ♘g6 9.♗e4



White has not played the opening very well, and in addition he spent a mass of time on it. Black has a number of continuations leading to quite comfortable play: 9...♗e7, 9...♕d7 or 9...♗xe4 10.♖xe4 ♘c6. To my surprise, Nikita quickly, and with the appearance of a man driving a nail into the lid of a coffin, played:
9...d3!? However, at times strange and highly unpleasant creatures can crawl out of a coffin... After some thought I realized that Nikita’s optimism was not unfounded. The d3-pawn cannot simply be picked up, and if Black completes his development and opens the position with ...f7-f6, events may take a turn familiar from the famous game Polugaevsky-Tal from the 1979 Interzonal Tournament in Riga. At some point I even set myself the objective of not so much saving myself, as at least initiating a fight... Fortunately, in the end I was able to find a very strong manoeuvre.
10.♕b3!



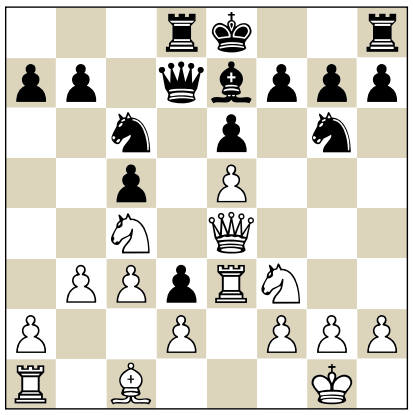
10...♕d7
During the game 10...♗xe4 11.♖xe4 ♕d7 seemed more unpleasant to me, but then there is 12.♖e3! ♘c6 13.♖xd3! ♕xd3 14.♕xb7 ♖d8 15.♕xc6+ with a very complicated position, although the stronger side in it is most probably White.
11.♕c4! Now White succeeds in activating his queen.
11...♗xe4 12.♕xe4
As Alexey Aleksandrov would say, White is playing ‘Catenaccio’: his pieces are bunched together on the back rank, with Vieri operating as a lone striker. But objectively the position is still roughly equal.
12...♘c6 13.♘c4 ♖d8 14.b3



14...♗e7

The prelude to a mistake. After 14...♕d5 and the approximate 15.♕xd5 (the attempt to fight for a tempo by 15.♖e3 ♗e7 16.a4 is possibly more accurate) 15...♖xd5 16.a4 ♗e7 17.g3 0-0 18.h4 h5 a strange situation arises, resembling some kind of 'clinch': for both sides it is extremely difficult to improve their positions.

15.♖e3



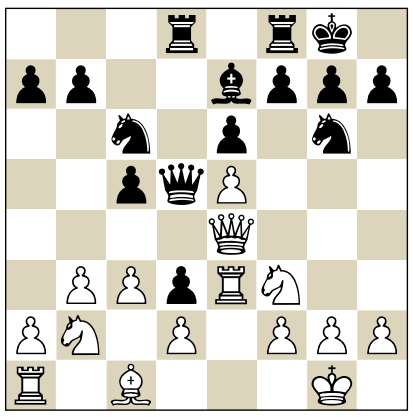
15...0-0?

15...♕d5 was now essential. Nikita and I thought that in the event of 16.♘d6+ ♗xd6 17.♕xd5 exd5 18.exd6+ ♔d7 19.♖xd3 ♔xd6 20.♗a3, Black had a tenable, although quite unpleasant endgame, but after the correct 19...d4! 20.cxd4 ♘f4! (the tempting 20...cxd4 is weaker in view of 21.b4! – but not 21.♘xd4 ♘f4 22.♘xc6 ♘xd3 23.♘xd8 ♖xd8 24.♗a3 ♖e8 25.♔f1 g5 and White is completely stalemated) 21.♖e3 cxd4 22.♖e4 ♘d3 Black has no problems. So that after 15...♕d5 White would have had to go in for the clinch by 16.a4.

16.♘b2

Now Black loses a pawn.

16...♕d5



17.♕xd5?

An annoying error. 17.♕xd3! was correct, when 17...♘gxe5? is not possible in view of 18.♘xe5 ♘xe5 19.♕xd5 ♖xd5 20.c4.

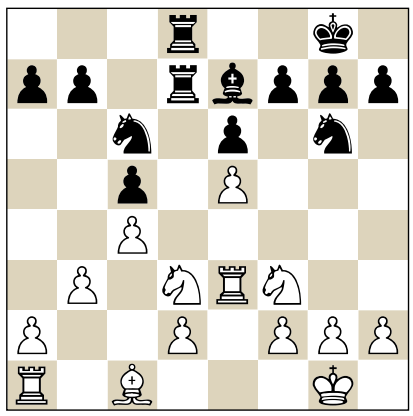
17...♖xd5?

Black returns the favour. He should have played 17...exd5 18.♘xd3 ♖fe8 with good compensation for the pawn. In this case a draw would have been the most probable result.

18.c4

But not 18.♘xd3 ♖fd8, when White loses his e5-pawn. It is possible that Vitiugov simply missed this intermediate move.

18...♖d7 19.♘xd3 ♖fd8

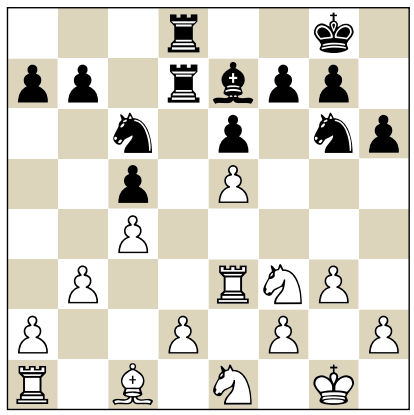


20.♘de1

The last instructive moment in the game. After the correct 20...♘h4 21.♘xh4 ♗xh4 22.♘f3 ♗e7 23.♗b2 a6 with the idea of ...b7-b5 Black would have retained quite tangible chances of a draw. Nikita is squeamish about exchanging his g6-knight for my 'ugly' piece on e1, and this is quite understandable. However, if you look into the position more deeply, it may be noticed that, apart from his extra pawn, White also has a spatial advantage and no weaknesses, which means that in the future his knights will inevitably be stronger than the enemy knights. For those who do not believe this, I can suggest carrying out a little experiment: take a pencil and mark the knights on e1 and g6, in order to follow their fates.

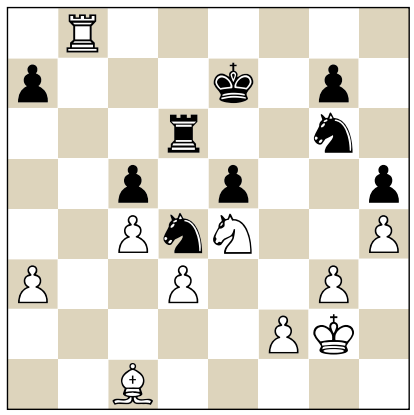
20...h6 21.g3

Subsequently the impression may be gained that White outplayed his opponent, but the credit for this belongs not to me, but to the position. As I have already said, Black is not only a pawn down, but he also lacks space; in other words his position is statically hopeless. At the same time he has no dynamic counterplay which could compensate for this. In such cases the position inevitably deteriorates, on condition that the opponent's actions are more or less sensible.



21...b6 22.♔g2 ♗g5 23.♖e4 f5 24.exf6 ♗xf6 25.♖b1 ♔f7 26.♗b2 ♘b4 27.a3 ♘c6 28.b4 ♘ce7 29.d3 ♘f5 30.h4 h5 31.♗c1 ♖e8 32.♘g5+ ♗xg5 33.♗xg5 e5 34.bxc5 bxc5 35.♖e2 ♖e6 36.♖eb2 ♖a6 37.♖b7 ♖xb7 38.♖xb7+ ♔g8 39.♗c1 ♘d4 40.♘f3 ♖d6 41.♖b8+ ♔f7 42.♘g5+ ♔e7 43.♘e4

For those too lazy to carry out the experiment with a pencil (99.9% of the readers, I suspect), I can tell you: the e1-knight is now on e4, while the g6-knight is still on g6... The game is decided.



43...♖b6 44.♗g5+ ♔f7 45.♖xb6 axb6 46.♗d8

Black resigned.

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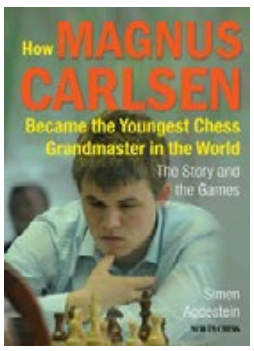

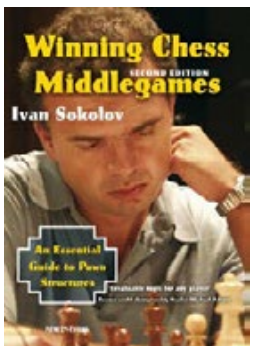

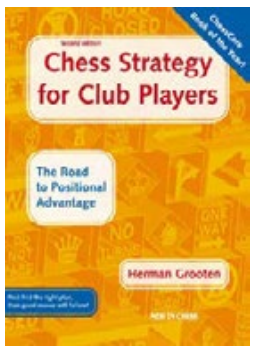

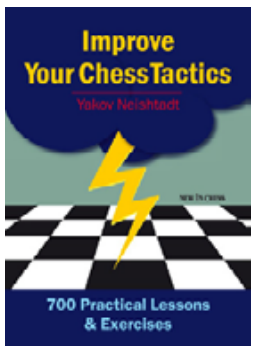

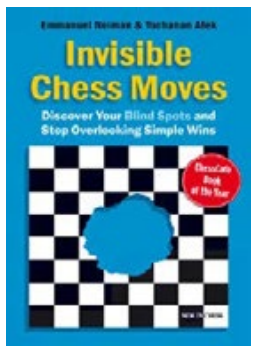

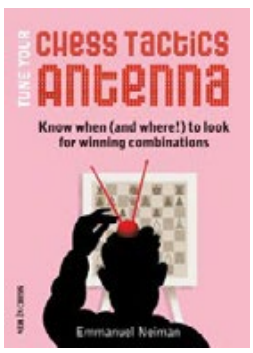

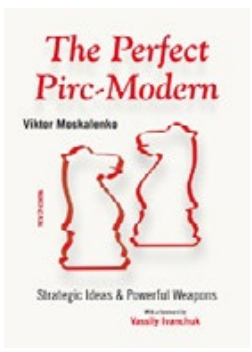

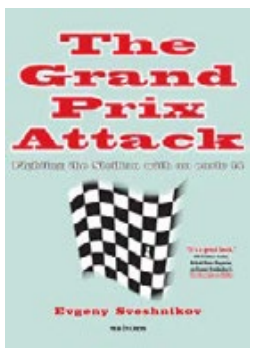

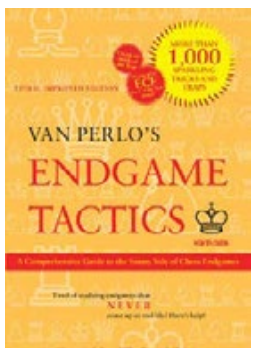

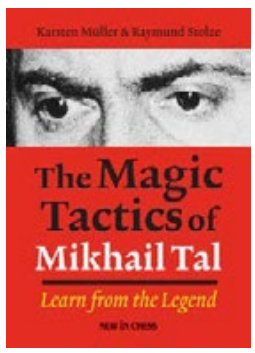

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Magazine

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The four women's teams played a double-round all-play-all. Because of a lack of coordination between the Russian and international calendars, the tournament in Loo clashed with a stage of the FIDE Grand Prix in Khanty-Mansiysk. As a result of which Yugra and Nashe Nasledie were missing several key players. But Yugra were fortunate with their replacement: Victoria Cmilyte, who was invited to play on board one, was in brilliant form and scored five points out of six. Her team mates also performed well. But the Muscovites clearly missed their leader Alexandra Kosteniuk and Olga Girya, who has recently made great progress. As a result Yugra finished first, Nashe Nasledie second and the Kazan team Ladya third.

NOTES BY
Victoria Cmilyte

QO 15.7 – D52
Victoria Cmilyte
Valentina Gunina
Sochi 2014 (2)

This year's Russian Women's Club Cup was a peculiar tournament, with only four teams competing in a double round-robin. Since I played in it the last time for the St. Petersburg team, back in 2011, many strong women's clubs have unfortunately ceased to exist, including my old team.

This time it was further weakened by the dates clashing with the Women's Grand Prix in Khanty-Mansiysk. That required some adjustments, and the reigning champions, Ugra, invited me as a substitute for their first board, Anna Ushenina, who was involved in Khanty.

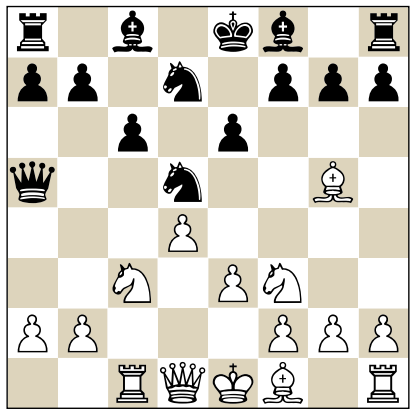
Despite the fact that there were so few teams, playing on first board meant a strong and steady opposition. Luckily, things got off to a nice start, and after winning my first game with black, I faced the reigning Russian champion Valentina Gunina, who represented our main rivals, the Moscow team, in Round 2.

1.c4 e6 2.♘f3 d5 3.d4 ♘f6 4.♘c3 c6 5.♗g5 ♘bd7 6.e3 ♕a5

After a slightly unusual move order we ended up in the classical Cambridge Springs.

7.cxd5 ♘xd5 8.♖c1

This introduces a very principled variation, which I have played many times over the past few years. White leaves a2 unprotected and encourages Black to take this unimportant pawn. Taking the pawn would cost her quite some time, while White will develop her pieces, castle and be ready for active play in the centre.



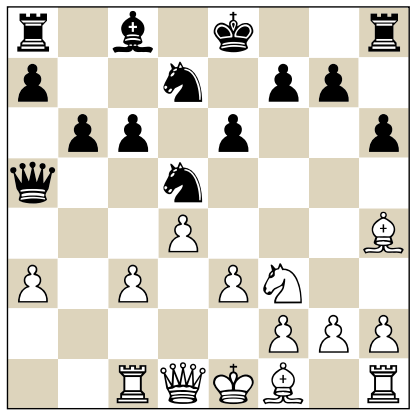
8...h6

This is often a useful move in this kind of position, but in connection with the ...b6 plan, as played in the game, it doesn't work too well.

8...♘xc3 9.bxc3 ♗a3 10.♖c2 b6 is a popular reaction at the highest level. It was seen in two recent Magnus Carlsen games. In 2013 he was Black against Gelfand in the London Candidates' and won after a complex struggle, while in a very recent game in the Gashimov Memorial in Shamkir, he won a nice game against Mamedyarov as White. It continued 11.♗e2 ♗a6 12.0-0 ♗xe2 13.♕xe2 0-0 14.e4 (14.♖d1 ♖ac8 15.e4 ♖fe8 16.♗f4 c5 17.♘d2, with a complex position, was played in Cmilyte-Dreev, Gibraltar 2014) 14...♖ac8 15.e5 ♕a4 16.c4 ♖fe8 17.♖d1 c5 18.d5, and Carlsen's aggressive approach looks very promising.

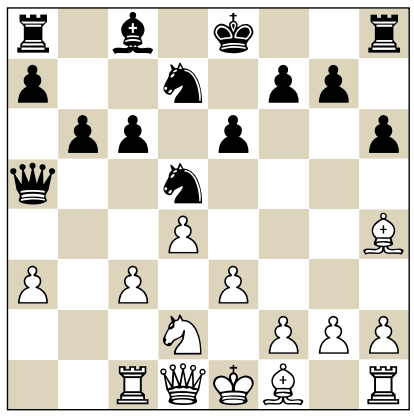
9.♗h4 ♗b4 10.a3 ♗xc3+ 11.bxc3 b6

The principled 11...♕xa3 was tried in Kramnik-Shirov, Tal Memorial 2010, where after 12.♕d2 b5 13.♗d3 0-0 14.0-0 ♗b7 15.c4 bxc4 16.♗xc4 White had good compensation for the pawn.



12.♘d2! Made possible by the inclusion of 8... h6 9. ♗h4 (else ♗g5 would be hanging). The idea is to unpin the c3-pawn and to meet ...♗a6 with c4 without exchanging the queens.

12.♕d2 is worse. After 12...c5 13.e4?! ♘5f6 Black was already completely fine in Cmilyte-Danielian, Beijing 2011.



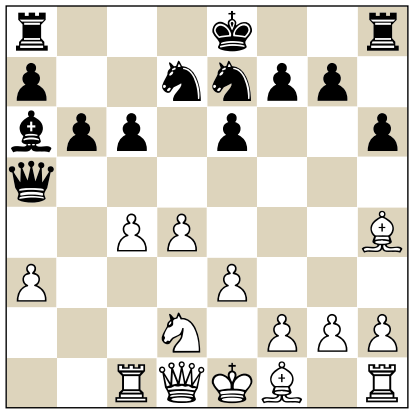
12...♗a6

12...♘xc3? is losing now, as 13.♕c2 ♘d5 14.♕xc6 ♖b8? ends in mate: 15.♕xc8+ ♖xc8 16.♖xc8 mate.

The a3-pawn is poisoned: 12...♕xa3? 13.♘c4 ♕f8 14.♗g3!, and the d6-square will be very comfortable for the white pieces.

13.c4 ♘e7

13...♘5f6 is a decent alternative. Still, White should be pleasantly better after 14.♗d3 0-0 15.0-0, due to the two bishops, the strong centre and the black pieces stuck on a5 and a6.



14.♗d3

Here White has a choice of which bishop to give up for the ♘e7: 14.♗xe7 ♔xe7 15.♗e2 ♖hd8 16.0-0 ♔f8 would be quite fine for Black, while it seems to me that the continuation in the game offers White better prospects.

14...♘f5

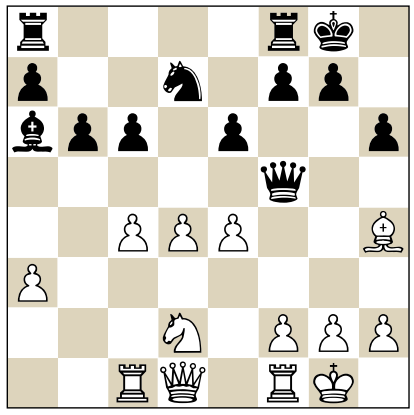
14...♕xa3 would be very risky here once again: 15.♗e4 ♗b7 16.0-0, and 16...0-0? loses to 17.♖a1 ♕b4 18.♖b1 ♕a3 19.♖b3 ♕d6 20.c5.

15.♗xf5 ♕xf5

15...exf5 is no good, for example 16.0-0 0-0? 17.♗e7, and after ♗b4 the black queen will be short of squares.

16.0-0 0-0 17.e4

The most natural move. White has a pleasant edge and easy play, whereas Black has to walk a thin line to prevent herself from getting a considerably worse position.



17...♕f4 During the game I thought 17...♕g6 was more or less the only move, as it doesn't allow White to roll the central pawns with tempo. After 18.f4 f5 19.e5 and if 19...♗b7 (if 19...c5, I wanted to try 20.d5 – 20.♕a4 ♗b7 21.d5 is also possible, but after 21...♖f7 22.♕b3 ♘f8 23.♘f3 ♖d7 the position is not entirely clear – 20...exd5 21.cxd5 ♗xf1 22.♕xf1, with a very interesting position) 20.♕f3 ♕f7 21.♖fd1 White should have the better prospects.

If 17...♕a5, the simple 18.♖e1 ♖fe8 19.e5 looks very promising.

18.♗g3 ♕g5

18...♕f6 was hardly better, as after 19.♕a4 ♗b7 (19...♕xd4 doesn't work due to 20.♘b3! – not 20.♕xa6?? ♘c5) 20.♘f3 ♕e7 21.c5 e5 (21...bxc5 22.dxc5 e5 23.♘h4 gives White a huge positional advantage) 22.♘xe5 ♘xe5 23.dxe5 White is just a pawn up.

19.♗d6

19.♘f3 was also good, for instance 19...♕a5 20.♗d6 ♖fd8 21.♖e1, with a great position. At this point it's mainly a matter of style, and I pre-

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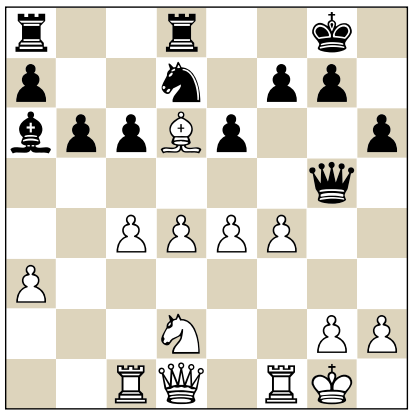
ferred a more direct approach with f4.
19...♖fd8 20.f4 Here it's easy to be White, as the central pawns are pretty powerful and there's little that Black can do to stop them.

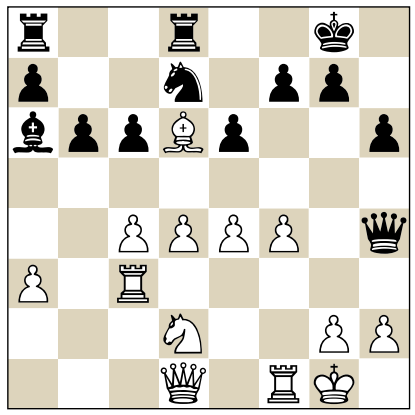


VLADIMIR BARSKY

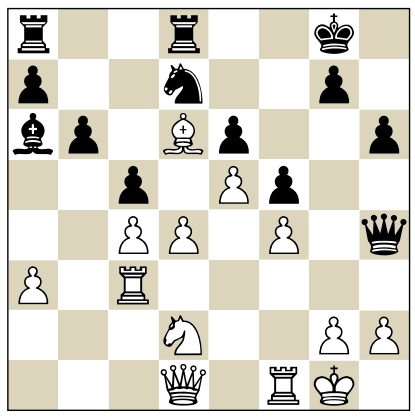
The performance of Ugra's Board 1 Victoria Cmilyte (5/6) was head and shoulders above her rivals, Kazan's Alisa Galliamova (3½/6) and Our Heritage's Valentina Gunina (2/5).

20...♕h4 20...♕f6 was objectively better, but some accuracy is still required: 21.e5 ♕f5 (not 21...♕g6, as 22.♖c3 c5 23.f5! exf5 24.♖g3 ♕h7 25.d5 looks awful for Black) 22.♕f3 (in case of 22.♕e2 c5 23.dxc5 ♗b7! would make sense, as now at least the bishop comes to life and Black can still fight; while 22.♖c3 runs into 22...c5, with an unclear position) 22...c5 23.♖fd1 cxd4 and now 24.♘b3! keeps the advantage.

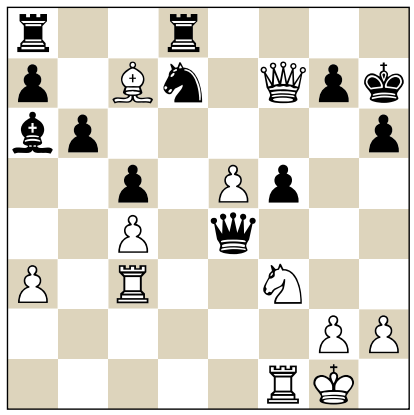
21.♖c3 21.e5 was also good.



21...c5
21...♕f6 would just lose a tempo compared to the line above: 22.e5 ♕f5 23.g4 ♕h7 24.♕a4 ♗b7 25.f5, and you can't envy Black's position.
22.e5 f5 Taking control of g4. But now White breaks through.
22...cxd4? 23.♖h3 would trap the queen.



23.d5! exd5
23...♘f8 was probably more tenacious. Still, I would have a pleasant choice between 24.♗xf8 ♖xf8 25.d6 and 24.♖h3 ♕g4 25.♕a4 ♗b7 26.♗e7!, and it's close to winning.
24.♘f3 ♕xf4
The pawn on f4 no longer matters, since the white queen comes into play now, with decisive threats.
25.♕xd5+ ♔h7
After 25...♔h8 26.♗c7 ♘f6 27.exf6 ♕xc7 28.♕xf5 the black king is very lonely: 28...♖f8 (28...gxf6 29.♘h4 ♖g8 30.♘g6+) 29.♘g5! gxf6 30.♖h3 ♕g7 31.♘e6 winning.
26.♗c7 ♕e4
26...♘f6 doesn't help either: 27.exf6 ♕xc7 28.♘g5+ hxg5 29.♖h3+ ♔g6 30.♕xf5+, with mate in a few moves.
27.♕f7
Among other things threatening 28.♘g5+. Black's position is hopeless.



27...♖f8 28.♕xd7 ♗xc4 29.♖e1 ♕d5 30.e6 ♖ac8 31.♗e5 ♖g8 32.♘g5+ ♔h8 33.♖h3
And Black resigned, as she can't avoid getting mated. ■

Sochi (men) 2014

1	Malachite Sverdlovsk	12	28½
2	SHSM-Our Heritage	11	25½
3	St. Petersburg CF	10	24
4	University Belorechensk	10	23
5	Ugra (Khanty)	7	23
6	Chigorin Club	7	21
7	Ladya (Kazan)	6	20½
8	Polyteknik Nizhny Tagil	6	20½
9	Zhiguli Samara	6	15½
10	Turbopump Voronezh	5	20
11	Moscow region	5	18
12	Atom Desnogorsk	5	16
13	Yamal	1	17½

Sochi (women) 2014

1	Ugra	9	15
2	SHSM-Our Heritage	8	13½
3	Ladya (Kazan)	6	12½
4	Chigorin Club	1	7

I'm a Believer

To my knowledge, no proper survey has ever been conducted on the spiritual beliefs of top chess players. From what I have observed though, over the decades, they are a predominantly atheistic or agnostic bunch. At the undoubted risk of offending the pious, I suggest there are, at least, two very good reasons for this: firstly, competitors are solely responsible for their own decisions. Therefore, with little or no luck in the game, begging for divine intercession, through prayer, is even more obviously futile than usual (although it may still help as a form of meditation). Secondly, and more importantly, the three main monotheistic religions demand a servile devotion to purportedly sacred texts, which is inimical to the process of doubt, questioning and ruthless inquiry that has hitherto been essential for the intellectual development of any strong grandmaster. Indeed, the really pernicious aspect of observed religion is this cerebral slavery to ancient scripture: a detached deist view (i.e. the universe is a very large and complicated place and something must have created it) is not necessarily, of itself, harmful – on a practical level anyway.

Faith, by definition, is unreason. If one could prove the existence of God, it wouldn't be faith. In our present computer age, however, it is an open question whether a seriously-suppressed critical and deductive faculty is quite the debilitating handicap, in chess, it once was. In the 1980s, many a worthy variation could be found in the Gospel according to *Sahovski Informator*. But for those at the forefront of the game, the greatest practical benefit was to be derived not by the passive acceptance and rote memorisation of the bi-annual wisdom disseminated by the high priests in Belgrade. That was only the starting point of the investigations. The real fun lay in slaughtering the lambs who so meekly followed that advice, even when it was wrong. In a nutshell, ripping up established theory was where true progress lay. That is still the case, but nowadays proper independent inquiry is not necessary, merely the banal, routine task of probing with engines. In a sense, Stockfish and Houdini have become our gods. Each year, their evaluations become ever more precise, and time spent doubting these electronic pronouncements is very likely to be time wasted. If you want to improve, you would be far better off accepting and absorbing the engines' teachings.

Despite what I said earlier, there are, naturally, still men of faith among the elite. The human mind has an astonishing capacity to compartmentalize: it is possible to adopt a position of abject mental prostration in one area and eager scientific inquiry in another – although the psychological acrobatics required for such a feat must be somewhat wearing, rather like running conflicting programmes simultaneously on your laptop. Inevitably, some famous chess names have found succour in religion: Bobby Fischer's most notable phase came during his post-Reykjavik 1972 seclusion, although he was no longer active then. Henrique Mecking, if the testimony from his 1992 book *Como Jesus Cristo Salvou a Minha Vida* is to be believed, has apparently had contact with the Messiah himself. It could be argued, however, that neither case demonstrates any positive correlation between religious fervour and mental well-being. Nevertheless, it would be most unfair to portray every GM with deep, spiritual leanings as being unhinged or just weird. Lajos Portisch is, and the late Vassily Smyslov was, for example, pretty normal. Of the younger generation, Wesley So, from the Philippines, is the only 2700+ person I am aware of with professedly devout beliefs.

A few people bring their religion with them to the chessboard. A man is perfectly entitled to belong to a creed of his own choosing, but when this impinges upon tournament regulations, or worse still, inconveniences his opponent, then there is something profoundly wrong. The Polish-American Jew, Sammy Reshevsky, was notorious for refusing to play on the Sabbath. Your columnist faced him once – coincidently, on a Saturday – in the last round of the Lugano Open in 1985. While it was a great honour to meet such a legend, it was extremely annoying to have to wait until the evening, hours after all the other games had begun, because the organisers had granted him this dispensation (naturally, I wasn't given a choice). Despite his advanced age (he was 73 at the time), he successfully resisted intense pressure past midnight, when I finally abandoned all winning attempts. The sly and somewhat

underhand manner in which he conducted peace negotiations early on – 'Are you playing for a win?' – suggested to me – possibly incorrectly, but you will never convince me otherwise – that he wasn't above a spot of gamesmanship, and that this whole Shabbat-charade was primarily an excuse to irritate his opponents.

'Viktor Kortchnoi's incredible motivation and career longevity has in part been fuelled by a profound misanthropy.'

At the 33rd Olympiad in Elista, 1998, Boris Gulko caused a degree of commotion by employing an assistant, or more literally an amanuensis (etymologically derived from 'servus a manu' or 'slave at hand'), to sit right beside him and press his clock during his games. Such a farcical arrangement should never have been tolerated. Unsurprisingly, this highly irregular ploy turned out to Gulko's benefit, as he performed well in excess of his modest 2585 rating at the time. If religious observance was so important, what was a professional doing working on the Shabbat? You can't just pick and choose – at least not if you want to be respected. Eric Liddell, the devout Scotsman who refused to run at the Paris Olympics in 1924 because the final took place on a Sunday, and about whom the film *Chariots of Fire* was made, would be turning in his grave at these shenanigans.

When England was paired against the United States in the 11th round, a protest became inevitable. David Norwood, our captain, after receiving a few slaps from his board two, and being shoved under a cold shower, was eventually roused from his customary alcoholic slumber. Showing a remarkable capacity for recovery, he headed off immediately to find the chief arbiter, Geurt Gijssen. Geurt, who hitherto had done everything to accommodate Gulko's ridiculous performance, probably in fear of being labelled an anti-Semite, was forced to concede that some people might find the horological pantomime distracting. The U.S. captain, Larry Christiansen, patriotically defended his man – but finally acknowledged they could play another reserve instead. England still lost the match 3-1, but an important point of principle was won.

Of course, the adherents of Judaism have no monopoly on customs or habits which, through cowardice and fear of offence, have wrongly been permitted to intrude upon our secular sport. Islam – the world's fastest growing religion – is encroaching in several ways, both major and minor. These range from the non-shaking of hands (a subject with which, thanks to Ivan Cheparinov, I am not unfamiliar) between sexes, and headscarves that could easily be used to conceal electronic devices. Apparently, participants at the Dubai Open routinely have their games interrupted and stopped by the muezzin's call to prayer. At least the latter is a private tournament under which one has no obligation to enter. FIDE must be vigilant not to permit such practices in official events. I am unaware of any schedules ever being changed to allow Christian service, but, in former times, when I was rudely dragged out of bed to play in the Bundesliga at 9 a.m. on Sunday morning, I sometimes wished they had been.

It is hard to believe but I had actually intended to write about the final weekend of the 4NCL, for this issue, in which my team, Guildford, trounced our arch-rivals Wood Green (average Elo 2647) by an astonishing 6-2 on the last day, thanks to brilliant wins by Maxime Vachier-Lagrave (vs. Michael Adams), Anish Giri (vs. Luke McShane), Gawain Jones (vs. Viktor Laznicka) and Romain Edouard (vs. Jon Ludvig Hammer). I must confess that I have never really forgiven Wood Green for dropping me from their side about 10 years ago. If it was because I was too expensive – fair enough. If it was because (as I suspect) one or two people were unhappy with me withdrawing, with excellent reason, from a tournament in the Isle of Man, then, frankly speaking, they blundered badly.

Forgiveness is a central tenet of Christianity. For the devout, the agonising asphyxiating crucifixion of Jesus of Nazareth, two millennia ago, was the highest act of moral purgation. Only through the supreme sacrifice of God's son could mankind obtain divine clemency. In the chess world, however, there is a lot to be said for nurturing grudges. Viktor Kortchnoi's incredible motivation and career longevity has in part been fuelled by a profound misanthropy (My favourite insult of his, to the unfortunate Mohamed Al-Modiahki: 'Do you speak English? – 'Yes' – 'Then why don't you resign?'). I cannot match the biliousness of the inimitable Viktor Lvovich. Furthermore, I didn't win against Wood Green either. But that same resentment, still smouldering a decade on, made team victory a touch sweeter. ■

‘Among a great many other things that chess teaches you is to control the initial excitement you feel when you see something that looks good. It trains you to think before grabbing, and to think just as objectively when you’re in trouble.’ Stanley Kubrick (1928-1999), one of the greatest filmmakers of the twentieth century, had a lifelong passion for chess. **Adam Feinstein** traces the role chess played in the life and work of a cinematographic genius, who gave us ground-breaking films as diverse as **2001: A Space Odyssey (1968), A Clockwork Orange (1971), The Shining (1980) and Eyes Wide Shut (1999).**

Stanley Kubrick the chess fanatic

Chess has featured in so many films over the years that we sometimes tend to forget these moments. Did you realise that the first time Humphrey Bogart (one of Hollywood’s strongest chess players) appears on the screen in *Casablanca*, he’s analysing a chess position – apparently from a game he was actually playing by correspondence at the time? On the other hand, if you’re a keen player, how many times have you watched a movie featuring a game of chess and you can’t help noticing that one of the player’s kings is marching ludicrously up the board in the opening stages of the encounter? Or even more frequently, that the board is set up the wrong way round? Examples of the board shown with the black square top left are legion: *Blade Runner,* Woody Allen’s *What’s New Pussycat?,* the James Bond movie *Never Say Never Again* and – most infamously – Ingmar Bergman’s *The Seventh Seal*, in which Max von Sydow plays chess with Death.

On the set of *Dr. Strangelove or: How I Learned to Stop Worrying and Love the Bomb*. During breaks Stanley Kubrick (right) engaged in many a game with George C. Scott, who played the role of General Buck Turgidson.

Moves and movies

One film-maker not guilty of committing that particular board error is Stanley Kubrick, the celebrated director of such remarkable movies as *Paths of Glory*, *Spartacus*, *Dr. Strangelove* and *2001: A Space Odyssey*. This is unsurprising, really – he was a life-long chess-lover and once played the game for a living. While working on his early documentaries, he would play in New York's Central Park or Washington Square, sometimes for up to 12 hours at a time. Yet as we shall see, even Kubrick's films contain mistakes. As the great world chess champion, Emanuel Lasker, memorably put it: 'Without error there can be no brilliancy'.

Chess became extremely important for Kubrick – and not just to provide him with enough cash to eat. It seems that, for Kubrick, the very process of making films called for a strategic discipline similar to that required to play chess. One of Kubrick's biographers, Vincent LoBrutto, has written that chess 'was more than a game to Stanley – it represented order, logic, perseverance, and self-discipline. The game embraced the young man's fascination with war and the military.'

But let's return to the beginning. Stanley Kubrick was born into a middle-class Jewish family on July 28, 1928 in the New York borough of the Bronx. By his own admission, he had few intellectual interests as a child and felt like a 'misfit'. His father, Jack (Jacques) Kubrick, a medical doctor of Eastern

Stanley Kubrick

Perfectionistic, visually innovative film-maker

Stanley Kubrick was born in Manhattan, New York, on July 26, 1928. His movie career began in 1951 with several short documentaries. *The Killing* (1956) – Kubrick's first full-length feature film shot with a professional cast and crew – had a **major influence** on later directors, including **Quentin Tarantino**. *Paths of Glory* (1957), starring Kirk Douglas, was Kubrick's first major commercial and critical success. Kirk Douglas starred again, alongside Laurence Olivier and Tony Curtis, in Kubrick's *Spartacus* (1960). In 1962, Kubrick moved to England to film *Lolita*, a **controversial adaptation** of Vladimir Nabokov's novel. In 1964, he made the daringly satirical black comedy *Dr Strangelove or: How I Learned to Stop Worrying and Love the Bomb*, starring Peter Sellers playing three different roles. Perhaps Kubrick's **best-known movie** is *2001: A Space Odyssey* (1968), with its landmark use of special effects. His further body of work includes such highly different films as *A Clockwork Orange* (1971), *Barry Lyndon* (1975), *The Shining* (1980) and *Full Metal Jacket* (1987). His **final film** was *Eyes Wide Shut* (1999), starring Tom Cruise and Nicole Kidman. The thrice-married Kubrick died in March 7 that same year. During his lifetime, he was nominated for an **Academy Award** six times but surprisingly won **just one Oscar** – for best visual effects on *2001: A Space Odyssey*.

European origin, taught him to play chess at the age of 12. A year later, he gave Stanley a camera for his birthday and the lad became a keen photographer. At the age of 16, he sold a photograph of a news vendor in New York the day President Franklin D. Roosevelt died to *Look* magazine and the publication took him on as an apprentice photographer the following year.

It was at around the age of 17 that Stanley began playing in tournaments at the Marshall Chess Club on West 10th Street in New York – a long-time rival to the Manhattan Chess Club – and for money in Washington Square in Greenwich Village, earning about $20 a week. In his own words, this went 'a long way when you are only paying for food'. He came to know precisely when to acquire a park chess table in the shade during the day and a table under the lights at night. Among his chess-playing friends was the American grandmaster Larry Evans. According to his friend, the American writer and former war correspondent Michael Herr – who co-wrote the screenplay for Kubrick's Vietnam War film *Full Metal Jacket* – Kubrick always disliked the usual references to his having been a 'chess hustler' in his Greenwich Village days, 'as though this impugned the gravity and beauty of the exercise, the suggestion that his game wasn't *pour le sport* or, more correctly, *pour l'art*. To win the game was important, to win the money was irresistible, but it was nothing compared with his game, with the searching, endless action of working on his game. But of course he was hustling, he was always hustling; as he grew older and moved beyond still photography, chess became movies, and movies became chess by other means. I doubt that he ever thought of chess as just a game, or even as a game at all. I do imagine that a lot of people sitting across the board from him got melted, fried and fragmented when Stanley let that cool ray come streaming down out of his eyes – talk about penetrating looks and piercing intelligence; here they'd sat down to a nice game of chess, and all of a sudden he was doing the thinking for both of them.'

One day, at the Marshall Chess Club, Kubrick met Alton Cook, a film critic for the *New York World-Telegram and Sun*. This chance encounter helped to inspire an interest in making movies for the first time. In 1950, Kubrick made his first film, a 16-minute boxing documentary called *Day of the Fight*, and quit his job at *Look* magazine. Three years later, he moved to Hollywood and directed his first feature film, *Fear and Desire*, which he financed personally. He himself later called it 'a pretentious, inept and boring film – a youthful mistake costing about 50,000 dollars.'

In 1955, while still playing chess in Greenwich Village, he made the suspense film, *Killer's Kiss*. The following year, he directed the taut thriller, *The Killing* – his first movie featuring chess. In it, Johnny Clay (played by Sterling Hayden), after getting out of Alcatraz prison, masterminds a racetrack heist. At one point, he visits the Academy of Chess and Checkers (otherwise known as the Flea House), looking for a friend, and when he asks the buddy in question, played by Kola Kwariani, how life has been treating him, Kwariani replies: 'About the same as always. When I need some money, I go out and wrestle. But mostly I'm up here, wasting my time playing chess. But I wouldn't know what to do with myself if I didn't have this place to go to.' The Academy of Chess and Checkers was actually a Hollywood mock-up of the genuine 42nd Street Chess and Checker Parlour in New York, where both Kubrick and Kwariani played regularly. In fact, Kwariani, a professional wrestler and wrestling promoter, was known to play chess at the club for five or six days in a row without sleep. Which makes it even odder to find an error at the point where Kwariani is kibitzing a game: he mentions a bishop move, but all four bishops have already been captured and off

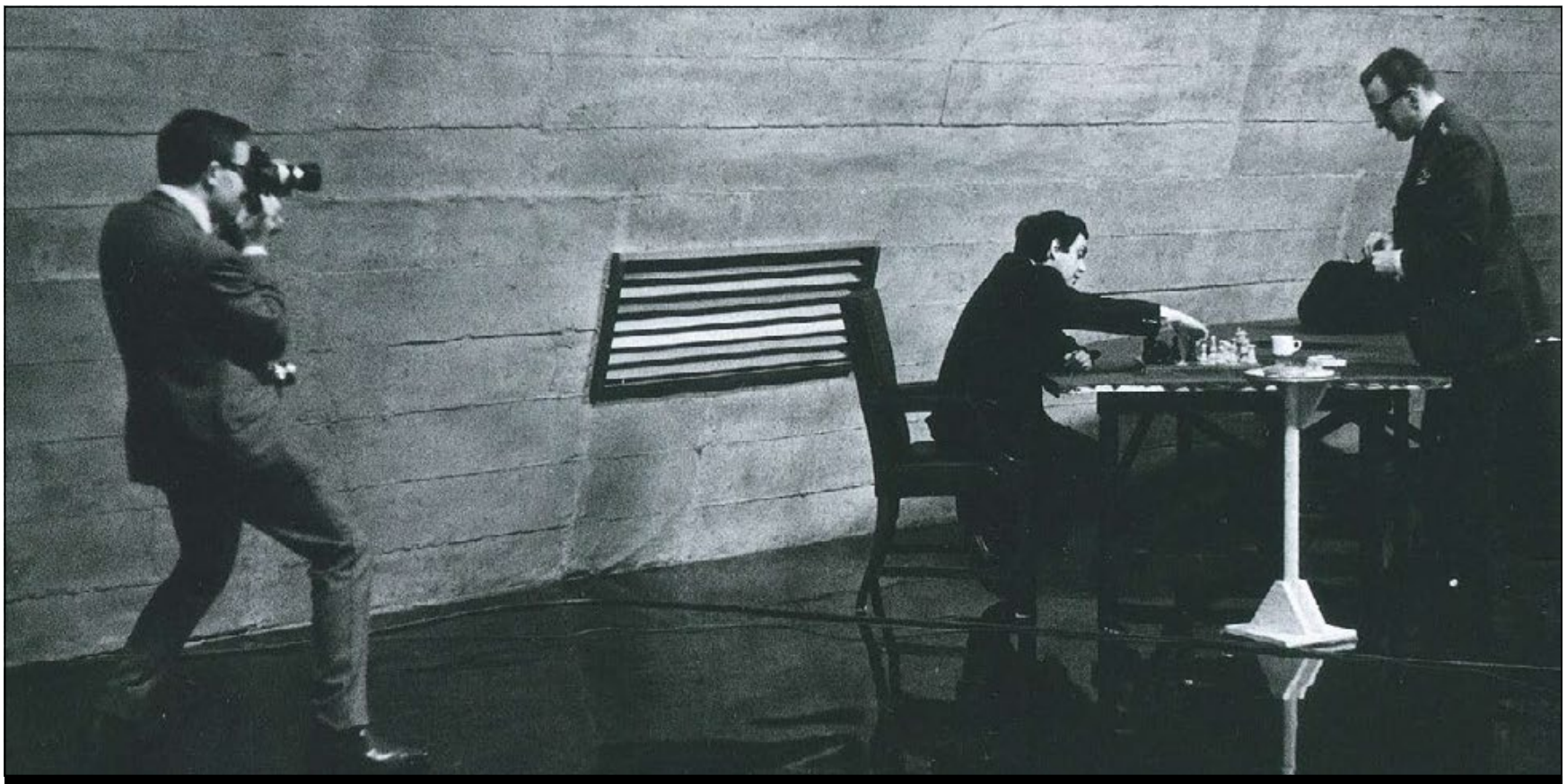
the board at the time. Nevertheless, a still from *The Killing* made the cover of *Chess Review* magazine in March 1956. Sadly, Kwariani, who was generally known at the club as Kak-Kak, was killed by a gang of youths while entering the premises in 1980. According to Bill Hook's memoir *Hooked on Chess*, they tried to rob him and 'though over 70 at the time, the wrestler's natural impulse was to fight, but he received a knife wound and later died in hospital.'

The late British film critic, Alexander Walker, describes the criminals in *The Killing* as being 'as human as [John] Huston's but he [Kubrick] stays detached, cynical. Like a psychologist supervising a devilishly constructed maze, he knows it does not pay to get too fond of the rats.' Other writers have also drawn attention to the chesslike 'intellectual detachment' in many of Kubrick's movies. But in one sense, this approach to Kubrick's cinema minimises the very real passion he felt for the game of chess.

After *Paths of Glory* (1957) and *Spartacus* (1960) – both of which, significantly perhaps, include shots of floors with chessboard patterns – Kubrick directed *Lolita* in 1962. This controversial film was based on the 1955 novel of the same name by Vladimir Nabokov, who was himself a very keen chess player. Indeed, another of his novels, this time focused almost entirely on chess, would also be turned into a film, *The Luzhin Defence*, in 2000 (the British grandmaster, Jon Speelman, provided the sequences of moves which Luzhin plays in his games.) Nabokov himself was hired to write the screenplay for *Lolita*, and delivered a 400-page manuscript to Kubrick, almost none of which the director used. Nevertheless, Nabokov retained the sole screenwriting credit, and was nominated for an Oscar. One of the oddest aspects of this movie is that it includes a chess scene which does not appear in the original novel. Humbert Humbert (played by James Mason in the film), plays chess with Charlotte Haze (Shelley Winters), mother of the 13-year-old eponymous nymphet, Lolita (Sue Lyon), with whom he is infatuated. Charlotte clearly does not understand the game of chess, but she insists on playing against the intelligent and calculating Humbert, with whom she is in love. Lolita returns home from a dance and, as Humbert eyes her up, Charlotte remarks: 'You're going to take my Queen.'

'Other writers have also drawn attention to the chesslike "intellectual detachment" in many of Kubrick's movies.'

The erotic symbolism in that scene is pretty blatant. We've seen it elsewhere in a celluloid context, of course – think of the highly charged chess game between Steve McQueen and Faye Dunaway in Norman Jewison's original (1968) version of *The Thomas Crown Affair*. However,



Peter Sellers, who played three main characters in *Dr. Strangelove*, happily experimented with his new Nikon camera as Kubrick and Scott played a game of chess.

Michel Ciment, the French film critic and editor of the magazine *Positif,* has pointed out another important aspect: 'The symbolism of chess, a game that originated in India, bears a resemblance to that of military strategy. It represents a conflict between black and white pieces, between shadow and light, between the Titans and the Gods ... What is at stake in the conflict is the supremacy of the world … The conflict can be transposed on to the existential plane where the player's skill coincides with universal intelligence. There was nothing fortuitous about Kubrick's collaboration with another great lover of chess, Nabokov (whose *Laughter in the Dark* he also considered adapting), and Edmond Bernhard has analysed the themes of the novel *Lolita* in terms of the game.'

I will return to this military analogy later. For the time being, it is worth noting that Kubrick and Nabokov first met in an office at Universal Studios in March 1960 to discuss the screen adaptation of *Lolita* and Nabokov was a guest of honour at a dinner party in New York to mark the film's release. But whether the two men ever clashed over the chessboard remains a beguiling mystery. Vincent LoBrutto notes that, despite the 30-year age gap between them, as chess players 'they understood the dark side of human nature and used their intelligence to make their way through demanding professions.'

In 1964, Kubrick directed the satirical masterpiece, *Dr. Strangelove, or: How I Learned to Stop Worrying and Love the Bomb,* based on a novel, *Red Alert*, by Peter George. The late American screenwriter Terry Southern, who scripted the film, described Kubrick as 'a chess-playing poet and extremely articulate, speaking in visual metaphor, with the kind of relentless honesty of principle and direction that is a rare felicity indeed.' During the shooting of the movie, Kubrick played a number of chess games with the cast and crew, most notably with George C. Scott, who plays General 'Buck' Turgidson. In an interview, Kubrick said: 'If I recall correctly, he didn't win many games from me. This gave me a certain edge with him on everything else. If you fancy yourself as a good chess-player, you have an inordinate respect for people who can beat you.' By this time, Scott had already earned the reputation of being a temperamental actor, but the word on the set was that Kubrick impressed Scott by beating him at chess while still tending to the direction of the picture. Kubrick told the American author, Gene Phillips, that Scott had admired his abilities as a director, not as a chess-player; but the legend persists that Kubrick 'tamed' Scott with his expertise at chess. Scott himself remarks in

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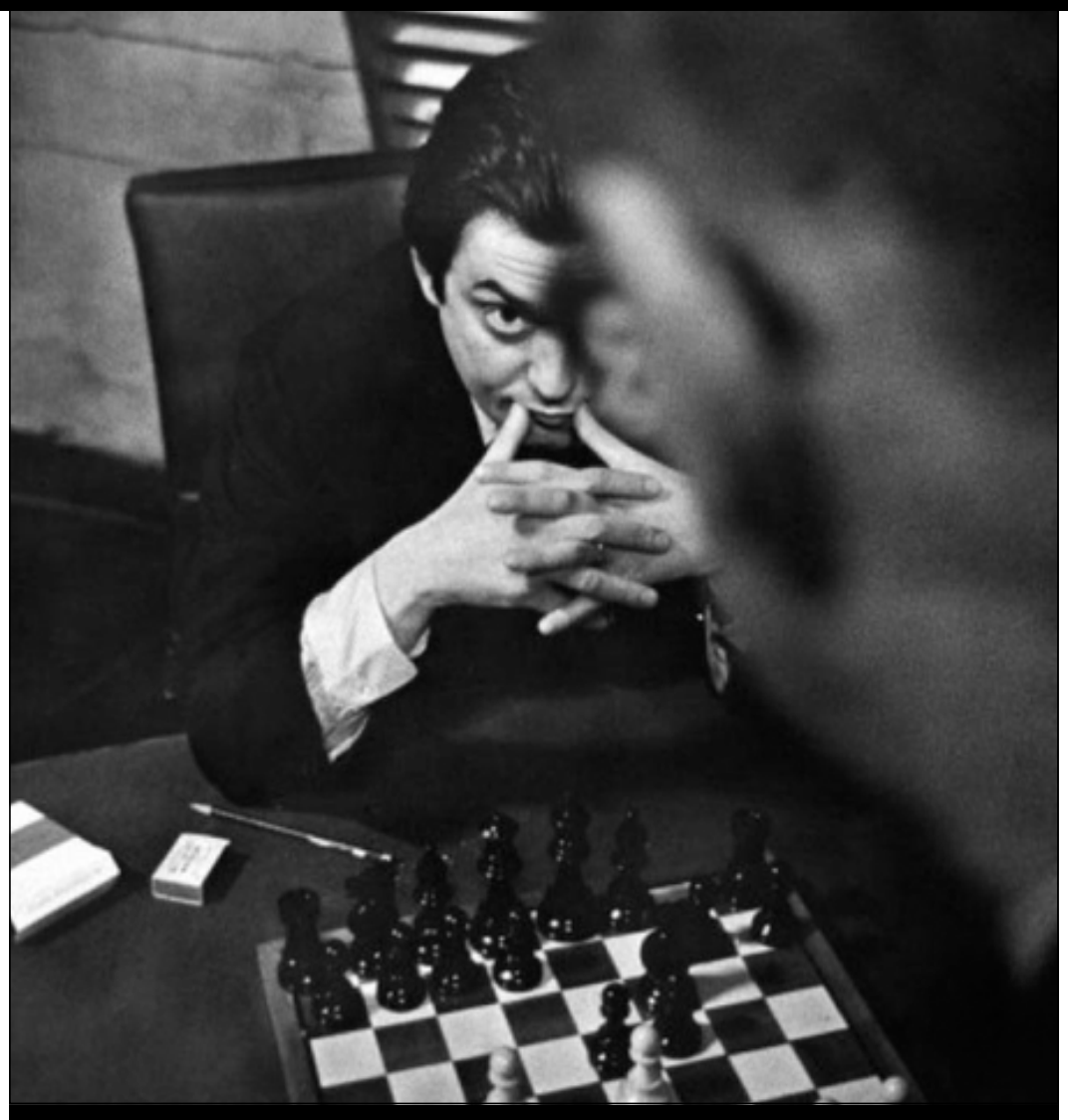
James Howard's book on the director: 'Kubrick is most certainly in command, and he's so self-effacing that it's impossible to be offended by him.'

Four years later, in 1968, Kubrick directed *2001: A Space Odyssey*, based on Arthur C. Clarke's 1948 short story, *The Sentinel*. In this hugely influential movie, the astronaut, Dr Frank Poole, played by Gary Lockwood, plays a game of chess with the on-board computer, HAL 9000. It is based on a genuine game between Otto Rösch and Willy Schlage played in Hamburg in 1910. Astonishingly, given Kubrick's chess prowess, several mistakes slipped into this scene. The moves were in English Descriptive instead of algebraic, a move was in wrong descriptive notation for Black ('Queen to Bishop Three' when it should have been 'Queen to Bishop Six'), and it was a mate in three, not a mate in two, since the moves were not forced by HAL. (Incidentally, Smyslov, the chief Soviet scientist who visits the space station in the film, is named after the former world chess champion, Vassily Smyslov. Larry Evans – who played chess with Kubrick at the club featured in *The Killing* – also pointed out that the first-ever game of chess between Earth and outer space took place during the flight of Russia's Soyuz 9 in 1970, two years after *2001* was released, and that one of the cosmonauts on that flight, Vitaly Sevastianov, later became head of the Soviet Chess Federation.)

While directing *2001*, Kubrick again satisfied his hunger for playing chess – most frequently with the American physicist, Jeremy Bernstein. They played at the Dorchester Hotel in London, where Kubrick was temporarily living with his family, but also on the film set. Bernstein said they once had to use coins and other objects for the pieces. He recalled his first game at the Dorchester: 'He was a real hustler. When you were trying to think, he would snap his fingers and look at his watch. Kubrick brought out a chess set and beat me promptly. Then we played three more games and he beat me less promptly. But I won the fifth game. Seizing the moment, I told him that I had been hustling him and had deliberately lost the first four games. His response was that I was a *patzer*. All during the filming of *2001*, we played chess whenever I was in London and every fifth game I did something unusual. Finally we reached the 25th game and it was agreed that this would decide the matter. Well into the game, he made a move that I was sure was a loser. He even clutched his stomach to show how upset he was. But it was a trap and I was promptly clobbered. "You didn't know I could act too", he remarked.'



For Stanley Kubrick, the very process of making films called for a strategic discipline similar to that required to play chess.

In the late 1960s, in the wake of the success of *2001*, Kubrick planned a large-scale biographical feature film about a legendary military figure with the strategic mind of a chess-player: Napoleon Bonaparte. Kubrick wrote a preliminary screenplay and, since he intended to shoot the battle scenes in Romania, he had enlisted the support of the Romanian army. He obsessively took 15,000 photographs of potential locations for Napoleon and his index-card system, which he used to co-ordinate all his characters' movements so that he knew where each of them was at any one time, ran to 25,000 entries. He apparently envisaged David Hemmings as Napoleon and Audrey Hepburn as Josephine (Hepburn courteously turned down the role due to a career break). This intriguing project was eventually scrapped due to the prohibitive cost of location filming and the commercial failure of Sergei Bondarchuk's 1970 Napoleon-themed movie *Waterloo*. (In March 2013, the director Steven Spielberg announced that he would be developing *Napoleon* as a TV mini-series based on Kubrick's original screenplay.)

Some of those who worked with Kubrick on his abortive project – including the historian Felix Markham, whose 1966 biography of Napoleon was Kubrick's key source – have claimed that chess helped Kubrick to nail down Napoleon's personality. To Kubrick, they point out, Napoleon's

Achilles heel was his inability to play what chess-players call the *Zwischenzug* – the 'in-between' move of battle played in the limbo between attack and defence, when there is nothing to attack or defend. Kubrick himself put it this way: 'The situation between attacking and retreating [Napoleon] finds unbearable. He will take it either way. Whatever circumstance dictated, he can accept it and function well. But he can't function in that in-between spot. He doesn't like it. It makes him anxious.'

In fact, at the launch of a book about the Napoleon project in 2010, Kubrick's widow, Christiane, remarked: 'When Stanley was young, he played chess for money for a while in New York. [He believed] Napoleon might have learned to control himself better had he played chess. Stanley thought if you are too emotional, you lose.' She added that Kubrick struggled to understand how such a capable man as Napoleon could be so manipulated by the philandering Josephine, or have so hopelessly miscalculated the Russian campaign which defeated him.

Jan Harlan, Kubrick's brother-in-law and long-time producer, wrote in the book: 'At a deeper level, his never-ending interest in observing human folly was the wellspring for nearly all his films. Napoleon was the ideal study subject. One of Stanley's often repeated notions was that, since we are all driven by our emotions, our belief that we might be governed by rational thought is a vain illusion.'

In 1971, Kubrick directed his polemical adaptation of Anthony Burgess' novel, *A Clockwork Orange*. Its depiction of teenage violence led to Kubrick receiving death threats after a series of copycat crimes allegedly based on the movie and he personally withdrew the film from release in the United Kingdom. He himself argued, however: 'To try and fasten any responsibility on art as the cause of life seems to me to put the case the wrong way around. Art consists of reshaping life, but it does not create life, nor cause life.' The movie was banned completely until after Kubrick's death, and not re-released until 2000. Malcolm McDowell, who takes the role of the charismatic gang leader, Alex, in the film, played a great deal of table tennis with Kubrick. He recalled: 'Ping-pong is one game I'm really good at, and I used to thrash him a lot. But I did decline to play chess with him, because I knew that he was a "grand master". He was my director, and that's enough of the power going to him – if I beat him at ping-pong, then I get a little bit of it back.'

A Clockwork Orange was followed, in 1975, by the slow-moving but exquisite *Barry Lyndon*. Then in 1980, Kubrick directed *The Shining*, based on Stephen King's 1977 novel of the same name. One day, Tony Burton, who had a brief role as the garage owner, Larry Durkin, arrived with a chess set in the hope of getting a game with someone during a break from filming. Kubrick noticed the set and, despite production being behind schedule, proceeded to call off filming for the day and engage in a number of games with Burton. Burton managed to win only one of them, but nevertheless the director thanked him, saying it had been some time since he'd played against such a challenging opponent.

Kubrick's 1987 film, *Full Metal Jacket*, based on *The Short-Timers* – a first-time 1979 novel by the war correspondent Gustav Hasford, who had served as a marine in Vietnam – co-starred Matthew Modine. He later observed that Kubrick 'could learn more about a person by playing chess with them for an hour than a psychiatrist could learn after a year of therapy … I told him I played chess like a three-year-old. I didn't want him getting in my head. But you know what? Even my saying that allowed him to learn a lot about me. There's something very Machiavellian about playing chess. Somebody who really understands the game could create a situation to draw you into a trap, giving up the queen to win the game. He was a master, a real master at creating traps, of feints and illusions. Contrary to that perception, the image we have of Kubrick, that fierce, scowling face, that's the image he released to the world and it's something he was very much in control of. Like in *The Wizard of Oz*, when Toto goes and pulls back the curtain and you realise it's just a little guy pulling some levers.'

Kubrick played chess with at least two members of the cast of *Full Metal Jacket*: Arliss Howard and Adam Baldwin. Baldwin recalled: 'We would lay out the board and he would kind of waddle over and wipe you out in 15 moves. One time, I actually got him to blunder and I won the game – big deal, one out of 50. But I said: "Hah, I got ya, I got ya. You have to resign now." And he said to me: "The only reason you won, Adam, is because I have so little respect for your game that I made a blunder. Now get back to work." He had that little wry grin of his and walked away.'

A still from *The Killing* – with Kubrick in the middle – made the cover of *Chess Review* in March 1956.

Lolita (Sue Lyon) kisses Humbert Humbert (James Mason), as Charlotte Haze (Shelley Winters) ponders her next move. 'You are going to take my queen.'

In 1999, Kubrick directed what was to prove his final completed film, *Eyes Wide Shut,* based on the 1926 novella *Traumnovelle* (Dream Story) by the Austrian author Arthur Schnitzler. In his own memoir, *Eyes Wide Open*, the movie's screenwriter, Frederic Raphael, describes the two years or so that he and Kubrick spent working on the script for the movie, which starred Tom Cruise and Nicole Kidman. Raphael notes that his encounters with Kubrick resembled a series of chess matches. The first meeting with Kubrick was at the director's mansion north of London. 'Kubrick opened the door. He was wearing a blue overall with black buttons. He might have been a minor employee of the French railways.' Kubrick and Raphael faced each other sitting on upright chairs, as if playing chess.

'I knew that Stanley had been a ranking chess player', Raphael recalled. 'It was as if I had been rung by a cinematic Kasparov and there was now a board between us ...'

Stanley Kubrick died of a heart attack on March 7, 1999, at the age of 70. At the time, he was working on a new movie, *A.I. Artificial Intelligence.* Steven Spielberg took over as the movie's director and it was released (appropriately, perhaps) in 2001.

Significantly, when an exhibition of Kubrick memorabilia was mounted in Los Angeles in 2011, one of the most prominent objects on display – among the studio props, costumes, posters, publicity stills and marked-up scripts – was the director's personal chessboard. Kubrick experienced a particular exhilaration at that chessboard. He wrote: 'You sit at the board and suddenly your heart leaps. Your hand trembles to pick up the piece and move it. But what chess teaches you is that you must sit there calmly and think about whether it's really a good idea and whether there are other, better ideas.'

Kubrick was married three times: firstly, to his American high-school sweetheart, Toba Metz; secondly, to the Austrian-born dancer and theatrical designer, Ruth Sobotka (she had a brief role as a ballet dancer in Kubrick's film, *Killer's Kiss,* and was art director on *The Killing*), and finally to the German actress, Christiane Harlan.

Life, Kubrick could often be heard to say, was about problem-solving. He declared that movie-making, like chess, was 'a series of steps that you take one at a time, and it's balancing resources against the problem, which in chess is time and in movies is time and money.' One of his most explicit comparisons between the processes of chess-playing and movie-making came in a 1987 interview with *Rolling Stone* magazine. Kubrick stated: 'The part of the film that involves telling the story works pretty much the way I said. In the actual making of the movie, the chess analogy becomes more valid. It has to do with tournament chess, where you have a clock and you have to make a certain number of moves in a certain time. If you don't, you forfeit, even if you're a queen ahead. You'll see a grandmaster, the guy has three minutes on the clock and ten moves left. And he'll spend two minutes on one move, because he knows that if he doesn't get that one right, the game will be lost. And then he makes the last nine moves in a minute. And he may have done the right thing. Well, in film-making, you always have decisions like that. You are always pitting time and resources against quality and ideas.'

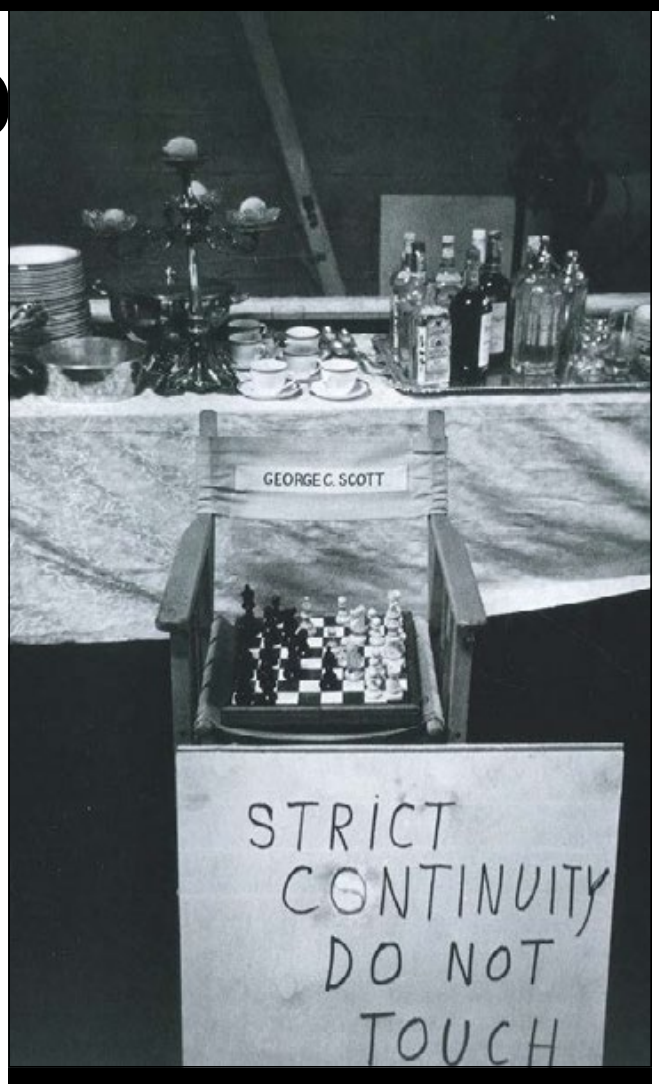
'Life, Kubrick could often be heard to say, was about problem-solving.'

Michel Ciment also asked Kubrick specifically about the analogies between chess-playing and film-making. The director replied: 'First of all, even the greatest International Grandmasters, however deeply they analyse a position, can seldom see to the end of the game. So their decision about each move is partly based on intuition. I was a pretty good chess-player but, of course, not in that class. Before I had anything better to do (making movies), I played in chess tournaments at

the Marshall and Manhattan Chess Clubs in New York, and for money in parks and elsewhere. Among a great many other things that chess teaches you is to control the initial excitement you feel when you see something that looks good. It trains you to think before grabbing, and to think just as objectively when you're in trouble. When you're making a film, you have to make most of your decisions on the run, and there is a tendency to always shoot from the hip. It takes more discipline than you might imagine to think, even for thirty seconds, in the noisy, confusing, high-pressure atmosphere of a film set. But a few seconds' thought can often prevent a serious mistake being made about something that looks good at first glance. With respect to films, chess is more useful, preventing you from making mistakes rather than giving you ideas. Ideas come spontaneously and the discipline required to evaluate and put them to use tends to be the real work.'

The American critical theorist, Glenn Perusek, has written: 'Kubrick, the chess player, was fascinated with strategic interaction … In the twentieth century, chess strategists recognised the importance of careful assessment of positions and the building up of small advantages before embarking on a dramatic combination. A combination, a bold series of moves that will bring a decisive edge to one side, should not be attempted unless it is founded upon significant advantages (in material or manoeuvrability) that had been built up previously … Launching premature, unprepared forays – combinations in chess, aggressive offensive actions in military situations – can result in the failure of strategic plans. It is a theme that recurs in Kubrick's films of strategic interaction.'

Perusek cites the afore-mentioned *The Killing* and also the magnificent *Paths of Glory* (1957), in which the judgement of one of the generals, Paul Mireau, is clouded by narrow considerations of personal advancement.



A sign that says it all: this was not a frivolous pastime.

Some writers, like the Spanish chess master and journalist Antonio Gude, maintain, rather surprisingly, that chess had no influence on Kubrick's films. 'Where it really exerted an influence was on his mentality', Gude said. 'There are very intelligent critics who continue to look for the influence of chess in his movies, but I think they're wrong. I sincerely believe that what chess taught this great artistic creator was to think, to calculate, to optimise resources, as well as to establish a strategy between what can and what cannot be done. Of course the influence is profound, but on his mentality, his vision and even the geometrical distribution of particular shots – but not directly on his visual discourse.'

Wendy Carlos, a pioneer in synthesised and electronic music, composed the soundtrack for both *A Clockwork Orange* – when she was still known as Walter Carlos (she had a sex-change in 1972) – and *The Shining* and knew Kubrick well. She said: 'I liked Stanley, I enjoyed Stanley, I loved his intelligence and curiosity – but he often drove me nuts. We'd completely, passionately disagree on some detail, where a day earlier we were seeing things in essentially congruent ways … He was mostly quiet-spoken and easy to take in person, a bit detached like the cool chess expert he also was, and I seldom heard him angry … It's also said that he was a recluse. Not really. A true recluse does not enjoy meeting new people, having hour-long phone calls with friends and associates, and inviting many of the most able people in a given field to come work with him. That allowed him to study them and their ideas, to figure out what makes them tick, in those most agreeable, flattering ways. I had the feeling Stanley enjoyed getting to know people.'

In his 1997 biography of the director, John Baxter insists that Kubrick used chess to subdue rebellious actors. One of the actors Baxter claims was targeted by Kubrick to 'wear down their resistance' over the chessboard was Shelley Duvall, who played Wendy Torrance, the female lead in *The Shining,* in 1978. Duvall and Kubrick did not get along particularly well during the six-month shooting schedule, by many accounts, and when he asked her to play chess with him again several years later, Duvall politely declined.

One of the most telling insights into Kubrick's use of chess as a way of manipulating his actors comes from Frederic Raphael, Kubrick's screenwriter on *Eyes Wide Shut*. Raphael told me: 'As for playing chess with actors, well, it's a glib image; and you could as well say that Kubrick played it with everybody in the movie world. On the other hand, chess is a game of cunning, a thing of spontaneous preconceptions, rather than attrition (only amateurs, I suspect, proceed by taking the enemy's pieces one by one; the beauty lies in the sudden *coup de maître*). I never thought Stanley was treating me as a pawn, nor as the enemy. He did not so much play white or black as own the board and all the pieces.' ■

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Analysis

Travels on my laptop

Highlights from Poikovsky, Havana and the US Championship

NEW IN CHESS

With a controlled plus-3 performance Alexander Morozevich was the deserved winner in Poikovsky.

NEW IN CHESS

Also in Havana stability was the road to success. Wesley So remained undefeated and claimed the Capablanca Memorial.

LENNART OOTES

At the U.S. Championship defending champion Gata Kamsky needed time to warm up, but won anyway.

While he himself was lying low, alternating training sessions and holidays, the chess world kept on turning. Fortunately, no matter what he was doing, every evening there was that quiet and joyful moment when he would open his iPad and scroll through games that were being played around the globe. Contributing editor **Anish Giri** shares his impressions about three prominent events that he followed and annotates three winners' games.

The Poikovsky tournament in Siberia, the Capablanca Memorial in Havana and the U.S. championship in St. Louis do not have too much in common, with the possible exception of the presence of a fair number of 'usual suspects'. You will rarely see a Poikovsky without Bologan, Bacrot, Onischuk or Rublevsky, or a Capablanca Memorial without Ivanchuk, Dominguez and Bruzon, or a U.S. Championship without Kamsky, Akobian, Shankland or Onischuk (oops, we've got an overlap here; the latter is a Poikovsky veteran as well, but this time he had to make a choice and opted for St. Louis).

Poikovsky

The Anatoly Karpov tournament in Poikovsky saw a spectacular start. Alexander Morozevich was on a roll, and so was... Ivan Saric! The Croatian GM is still young and no doubt talented, but it felt as if he was stagnating at the sub-elite 2600 level until earlier this year, when he won the Challengers in Wijk aan Zee and went on to dominate the national championship of his country. For Poikovsky he had been given a wildcard, and he will have at least one more opportunity to test himself at top level in January next year, when he will take part in the Tata Steel Masters.

In Siberia, Saric started confidently, beating several strong players in merciless style, but then he fell victim to a phenomenon that affected several of the participants: they played well either in the first or in the second half. The exact opposite was Victor Bologan, who started poorly and then finished with an explosive 4 out of 5.

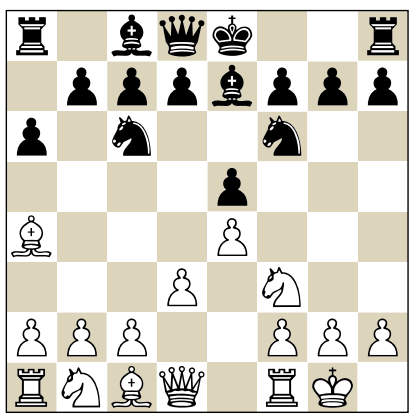
The only player who kept a stable pace was Morozevich, who finished undefeated, scoring +3, which was enough for clear first place. His victories were earned in good fights against Bologan, Motylev and Sutovsky. In the second half he was surprisingly pragmatic, going for solid draws at times, shunning unnecessary risks.

NOTES BY
Anish Giri

RL 13.5 – C84
Alexander Motylev
Alexander Morozevich
Poikovsky 2014 (2)

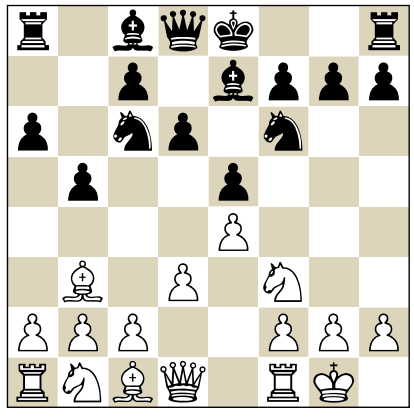
1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.♗b5
When it comes to the Spanish, Morozevich is generally a Zaitsev adherent. The problem, though, when preparing against the dangerous Russian wizard, is that it doesn't always become a Spanish. You also have to take into account the Sicilian, the French Defence, etc...

3...a6 4.♗a4 ♘f6 5.0-0 ♗e7 6.d3
Morozevich himself has also tried 5.d3, but the problem with that move order is that the f8-bishop keeps some flexibility and can be developed to either g7 or c5.



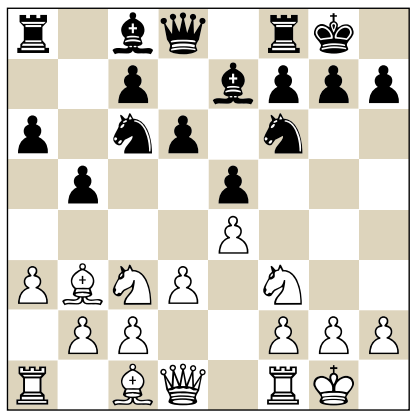
6...b5
Alexander used to play 6...d6 if my memory doesn't fail me (and no, it doesn't). After 7.c3 0-0 8.♘bd2 ♖e8 he lost to Leinier Dominguez, who came up with the interesting 9.d4!?. But that loss was hardly caused by the opening. Another quite critical move these days is 8...b5 9.♗c2 d5 10.♖e1 d4!?, which became popular after Levon Aronian got some nice positions. This advance feels premature, but so far no one has shown why.

7.♗b3 d6
7...0-0 doesn't change anything if White is in the 8.a3 mood, since now he can start with 8.♘c3! d6 9.a3.

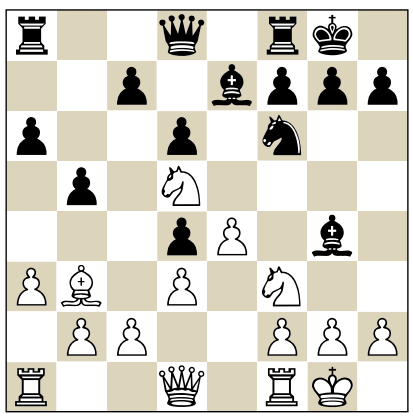


8.a3 This is one of the most topical anti-Marshalls (or anti-Spanish) at the moment. I have studied it in great detail, but never got to use it, since my opponent Vassily Ivanchuk played 6...d6 three times against me, and each time I kind of got outplayed, even though the result of our thematic mini-match was eventually in my favour (+1 =2).
8.♘c3?! ♘a5! always reminds me of my friend Benjamin Bok, who is perhaps the only player in the history of chess who managed to trap the 'Italian' bishop in a real game against a real grandmaster.

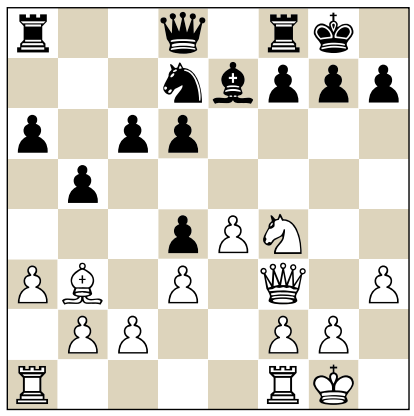
8...0-0 9.♘c3



9...♗g4
For a long time this was considered dubious, but lately more and more people are following this blessed path. Why blessed? Because it's Houdini's first choice!
9...♗e6 10.♘d5 ♘d4 was Svidler's solution, quickly picked up by another Marshall expert, Fabiano Caruana, but at some point someone realized that the bishop on b3 was actually not hanging and Dominguez beat Fabiano with the simple 10.♗e3!?.
9...♘a5 10.♗a2 ♗e6 (10...c5 was used by Najer to beat Motylev just a month before this game, but he surely came up with an improvement somewhere along the line) is Kasimdzhanov's invention, which featured in a pretty Dominguez-Aronian game (0-1) from Wijk aan Zee.
10.♗e3 ♘d4 11.♗xd4 exd4 12.♘d5



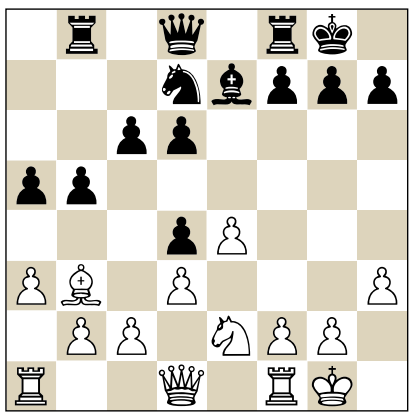
12...♘d7
Still the blessed path.
12...c5 was Eljanov's choice against Motylev later on in the tournament, but he was nicely outplayed by the Russian theoretician after 13.a4! ♗e6 14.♘xf6+ ♗xf6 15.♗xe6 fxe6 16.♕e2 ♕d7 17.b3, when Black turned out to have no plan, while White eventually got going with some clever manoeuvring.
13.h3 ♗xf3 14.♕xf3 c6 15.♘f4



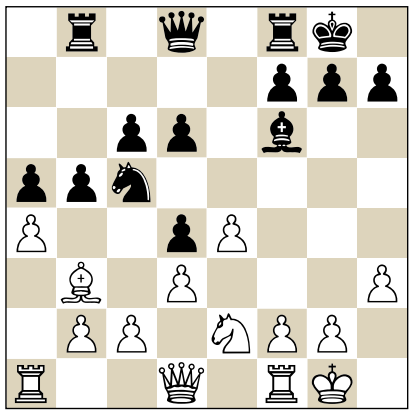
This position was the subject of many discussions in the top and sub-top in the past year. White's argument: it looks better for White, Black's argument: Houdini says 0.00. A common heartbreaking situation in the life of every modern top player.
Black's plan will be to try and get something going on the queenside, while White is going to enjoy his beautiful light-squared bishop and perhaps get some of his kingside pawns going.

'Houdini says 0.00. A common heartbreaking situation in the life of every modern top player.'

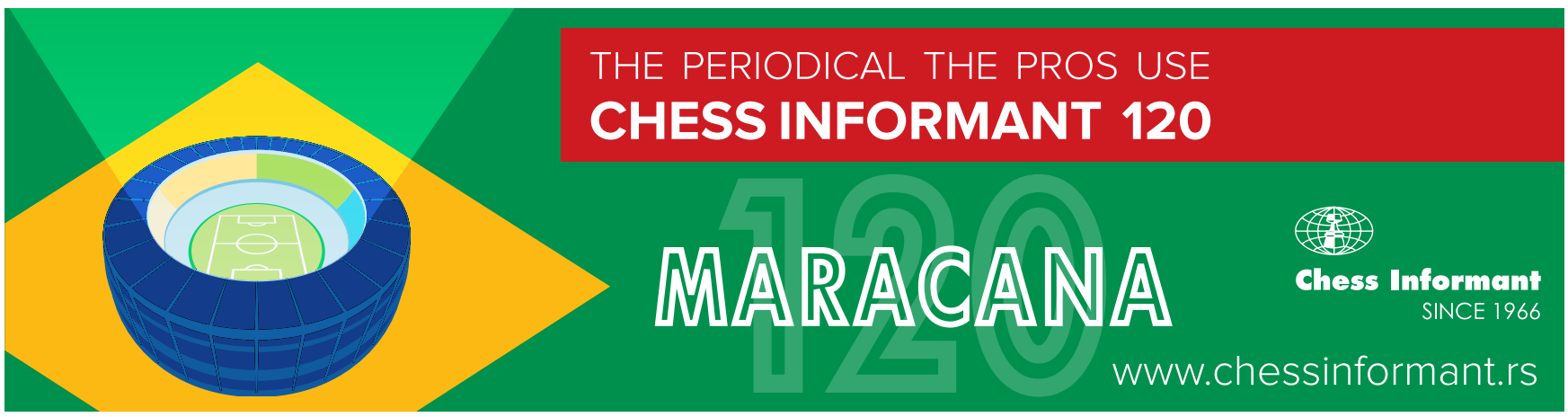
15...♖b8 There is a very deep reason why Tomashevsky starts with 15...g6 (in three games already), but I am not going to reveal it to my readers.
16.♕d1 a5 17.♘e2



17...♗f6
17...a4 18.♗a2 ♗f6 would avoid White's idea, but first of all I am not sure if it is worth avoiding, and secondly it makes sense to keep the a-pawn on a5, following the old Chinese saying that the threat is stronger than the execution.
18.a4 ♘c5



19.♘c1 A peculiar plan, which I have trouble believing in. White is keeping the status quo on the queen-



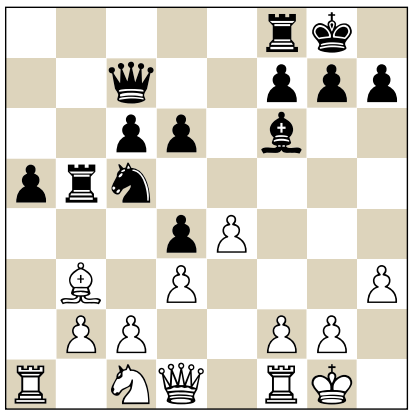
side, but on c1 the knight is just too defensive to be good, really. Good or not, the concept of ♕d1, ♘d5-f4-e2-c1 is indeed quite brilliant.

19...♕c7

Protecting the c6-pawn and creating the threat of 20...bxa4.

19...d5 leads to equality: 20.exd5 cxd5 21.axb5 ♖xb5 22.♕f3 a4, and eventually the queenside disappears and there will be not much left to play for.

20.axb5 ♖xb5



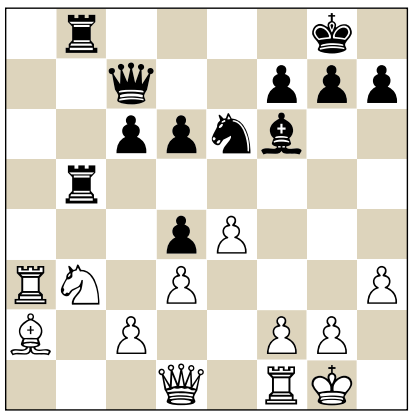
21.♖a3?!

Instead, 21.♗c4! ♖b4 (21...♖xb2 22.♘b3 looks good for White, as the rook on b2 is on the verge of getting trapped) 22.b3 a4 keeps the position unclear, but White should be at least quite safe. Once again there is the heartbreaking 0.00.

21...♖fb8

21...♖d8! is quite clever: 22.♗a2 d5, neutralizing the bishop on a2. The position makes me think of the Bird Variation (Spanish 3...♘d4) gone well for Black.

22.♗a2 a4 23.b3 axb3 24.♘xb3 ♘e6



The position looks alright for White, who has got rid of potential weaknesses on the queenside. The pieces on the queenside look a little awkward, though.

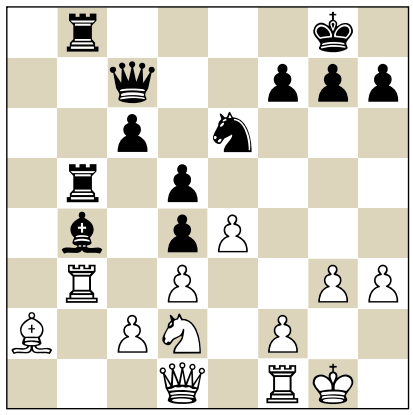
25.g3

25.f4!? is quite painful for the a2-bishop, but after 25...d5 26.e5 the machine claims the gorgeous pawn chain was worth it. I have my doubts.

25...d5

A bad sign for the a2-bishop and a good one for the one on f6. ...♗e7-b4-c3 is in the air.

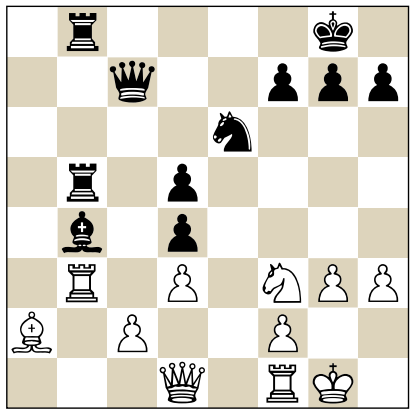
26.♘d2 ♗e7 27.♖b3 ♗b4



Having the bishop here is essential for Black's future hegemony on the e-file.

28.exd5 cxd5 29.♘f3

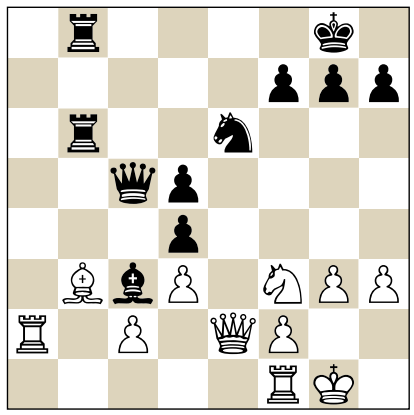
White has too good a pawn structure to be in trouble, but a closer look reveals that he will have some difficulty getting his pieces coordinated.



29...♕a5

The machine prefers to exchange a pair of rooks and eventually win a pawn on b3, but Morozevich decided that this would result in a tenable position for White, and starts an interesting mission of keeping both rooks on and shifting the weight of the major pieces from the b-file to the e-file.

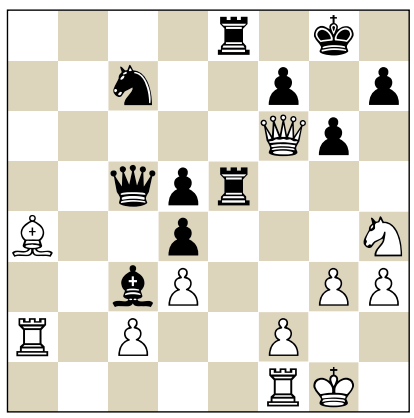
30.♖b2 ♖5b6 31.♗b3 ♗c3 32.♖a2 ♕c5 33.♕e2



33...♘c7!

It's beautiful how the knight opens the e-file, while at the same time covering all the vital squares on the a-file.

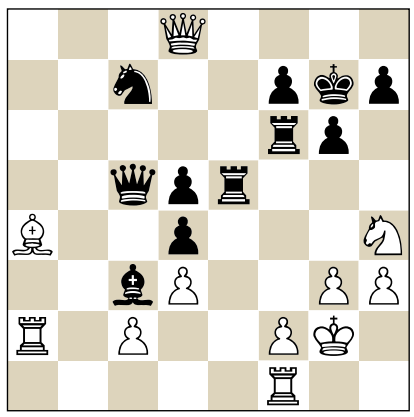
34.♘h4 ♖e8 35.♕g4 g6 36.♕g5 ♖be6 37.♗a4 ♖e5 38.♕f6



38...♖8e6!?

Morozevich goes all out with his pieces, giving up the back rank, just like he gave up the a-file. The pressure on Motylev is mounting.

39.♕d8+ ♔g7 40.♔g2 ♖f6!



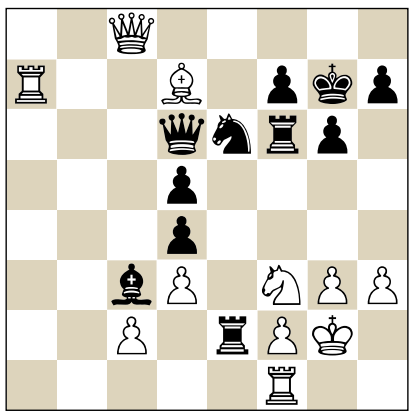
41.♗d7!? ♖e2

41...♖e7!? would be unpleasant to meet. The threat is 42...♕d6, and White has nothing better than with-

drawing the bishop, 42.♗a4!, and now once again Black can't break through at once after 42...♖e2 43.♘f3, which may be why Morozevich decided to keep things murkier with the bishop on d7.

42.♘f3 ♕d6 42...♗a5!? was quite nasty, keeping the rook away from a7.

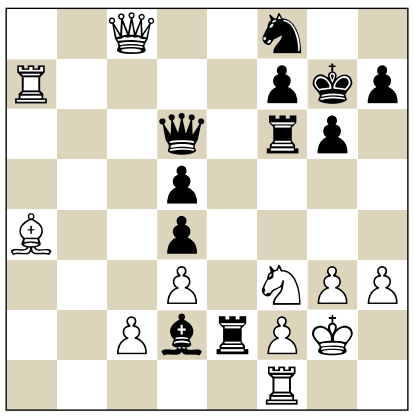
43.♖a7 ♘e6 44.♕c8



Motylev has done an incredible job of keeping his cool and creating counterplay. His king seems to be able to defend itself at the moment. Seeing that none of his tricks is working, Morozevich comes up with the idea to switch the knight to the defence and have a go with the bishop.

44...♘f8!? 45.♗a4 ♗d2

The mates are in the air and Motylev finally collapses.

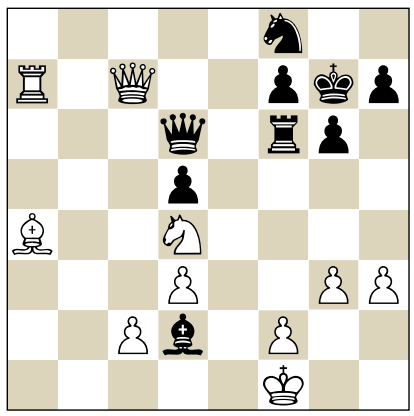


46.♘xd4?

There were many ways to lose immediately, but there was also one clear way to save the position, which unfortunately was too much for the White player to find: 46.♖a8! ♗e3 47.♕b8!, and White forces the exchange of queens without which Black will be unable to break through.

46...♖e1! Now White's king loses its most loyal defender: the f1-rook.

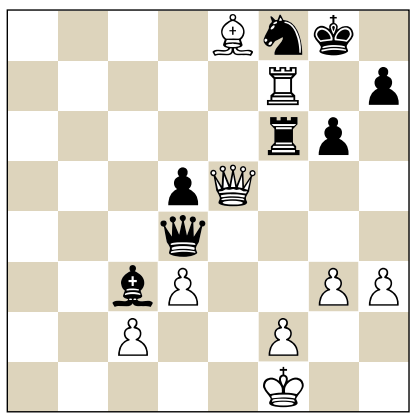
47.♕c7 ♖xf1 48.♔xf1



48...♕b4!? 48...♕xc7 49.♖xc7 ♗e3 is a good endgame, but Moro goes for More!

49.♕e5 ♗c3 50.♗e8 ♕xd4 51.♖xf7+ ♔g8

> 'But Moro goes for More!'



And Motylev had had enough. In fact, he could have tried to resist with 52.♕xf6 ♕xf6 53.♖xf6 ♗xf6 54.d4! ♗xd4 55.♗c6, but the endgame should still be lost. Moreover, White hasn't a single active idea and will have to move back and forth till Black finds the winning plan. Having said that, White should obviously have continued the struggle.

Havana

While Poikovsky is famous for its cold temperatures, the Capablanca Memorial is known for its heat. I remember one member of the European contingent once joking that it had been 'so warm for all of us that we ended up making draws with each other and only playing Chuky and Dominguez'. This year, though, the field saw (almost) no friends. There was the maximalist Vassily Ivanchuk, the invincible Wesley So, the mysterious Zoltan Almasi, the creative Paco Vallejo and the solid Cuban duo Leinier Dominguez and Lazaro Bruzon. It was immediately clear from the start: Chuky was out of form. He was creating and creating, but it kept backfiring. Even in his favourite Cuba he could not avoid finishing last. He created minefields on the chessboard and then walked through them barefoot.

The role of the leader was claimed by Wesley So, who, just like Morozevich in Siberia, finished on an undefeated +3. His wins were well deserved and his play was stable. The rest of the participants were having ups and downs. Particularly Paco Vallejo was suffering painful losses and then fighting back with great wins, which led to a very 'Zen' statement on Twitter: 'It's a very beautiful feeling when you don't see a big difference between winning or losing, just enjoying the pleasure of playing chess.'

Poikovsky 2014				cat. XVIII
				TPR
1 Morozevich	RUS	2719	6	2821
2 Jakovenko	RUS	2730	5½	2775
3 Shirov	LAT	2703	5	2741
4 Bacrot	FRA	2721	5	2739
5 Nepomniachtchi	RUS	2735	4½	2695
6 Motylev	RUS	2687	4½	2700
7 Saric	CRO	2666	4½	2702
8 Bologan	MDA	2655	4½	2703
9 Eljanov	UKR	2732	3½	2615
10 Sutovsky	ISR	2642	2	2485

To say a few words about the winner. Wesley has made clear progress since he moved to the United States and joined the chess team at Webster University. The time he spends there with talented and ambitious players like Le Quang Liem and Georg Meier, under the guidance of Susan Polgar, has clearly benefited him the most.

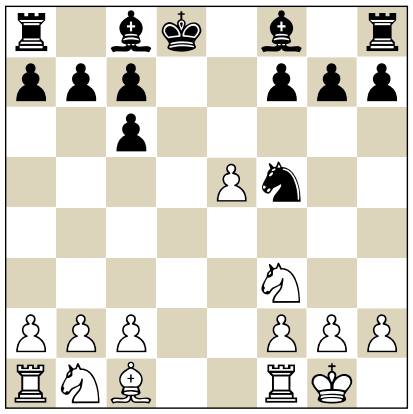
NOTES BY
Anish Giri

RL 7.4 – C67
Wesley So
Paco Vallejo
Havana 2014 (2)

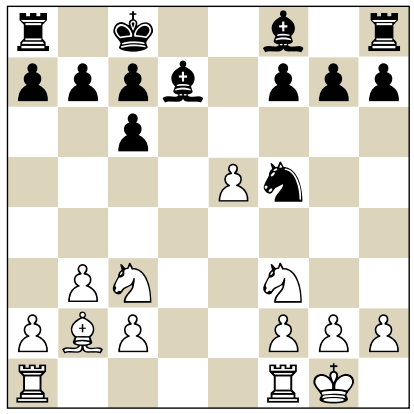
NEW IN CHESS

Wesley So has made clear progress since he moved to the United States and joined the chess team at Webster University.

1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.♗b5 ♘f6
Paco is a great guy, but thus far he has not been considered a big expert on the Berlin Wall endgame. On the other hand, nowadays everyone wants to have a little bite from this delicious Berlin pie, so just like all of us, Vallejo goes for it.
4.0-0 ♘xe4 5.d4
Wesley goes for the endgame. So be it!
5...♘d6 6.♗xc6 dxc6 7.dxe5 ♘f5 8.♕xd8+ ♔xd8



9.♘c3
9.h3 is a popular move order nowadays, the point being that after 9...♗d7 10.♖d1 White is asking Black some direct questions, as he is threatening to win a piece with g4! and e6!. This move order has been tried many times by Fabiano Caruana, Leinier Dominguez and even yours truly (that generally shouldn't be a bad sign, since till around move 15, I usually play pretty good chess too). At the moment, however, it is still not clear what can be achieved after 10...♔c8, which has become a pet line of Nakamura's (it started off with Kramnik and Adams), or after 10...♗e7, the so-called Norwegian line, played by Hammer, who probably analysed it, and by Magnus, who probably did not.
9...♗d7
I would hardly expect Vallejo to go for the other popular branch, starting with 9...♔e8 10.h3 h5, which leads to a safer but much more passive position...
That is what I would have said if Paco had not played 9...♔e8! against Dominguez a couple of days later in a game that he quickly and easily held. I myself played the Berlin Endgame twice as Black and both times I ended up going for the classical ...♔e8, ...♘e7-g6 plan (holding against the same Leinier Dominguez in Wijk aan Zee this year).
10.b3
It's more common to start with 10. h3, but nowadays everyone goes his own way, since the main road leads nowhere anyway.
10...♔c8 11.♗b2

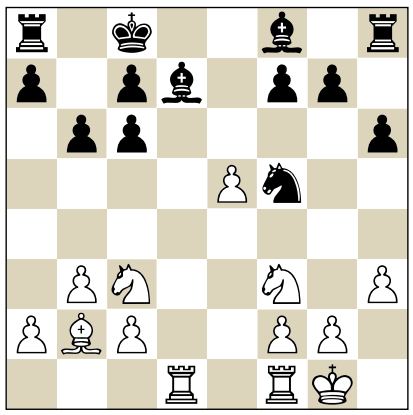


11...b6
Part of the standard plan. Eventually what Black wants (as I understand it) is ...♔b7, ... ♗c6, ...♖e8, ...♗e7-d8, and then push either his h-pawn or g-pawn. Well, if he achieved all of that, he would be doing pretty well. White, for his part, is trying to stop it by either getting his kingside pawns rolling or by coming up with some cheapo. Running ahead, Wesley managed to accomplish the latter.
12.♖ad1 h6
It's always the question whether this one is really needed.

12...♗e7 looks altogether more appealing, since the pawn is not yet on h3, ready to support g4: 13.h3 ♘h4, and eventually transposing to Caruana-Aronian, 2011, looks like a good way to handle the position.

13.h3

After all the random subtleties we are right in the big tabiya.



13...a5

This move can always be tried, as the inclusion of ...a5-a4 shouldn't be too bad for Black, when his king is right there to protect the c7-pawn for the future tactic with ♗f4/e6.

13...♘e7 is the old main line, when White either tries to double on the d-file or get his knight to f4: 14.♖fe1!? c5 15.♘e2 ♘g6 16.h4!. This is the last theoretical word, as far as I can tell (Anand-Nakamura, 2010). The pawn sacrifice 16...♗g4 17.♘h2! is the point.

13...c5!? is the trendy move, introduced into major practice by Ruslan Ponomariov, a great expert of the endgame. It was later given a definite quality stamp when it occurred in the game Kokarev-Leko, 2014: 14.♘d5 a5! 15.a4 c4!. This is the idea, when the complications seem to work out just fine for Black.

14.♖d3!?

14.a4 is the standard response, but that's what Black is hoping for.

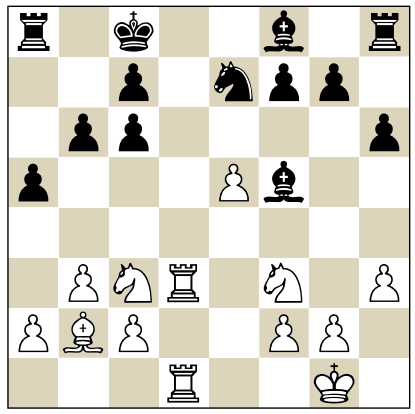
14.♖d2 is well met with 14...♗b4!.

14...♘e7!

It seemed as if 13....a5 was a waste of time, but on the other hand the rook on d3 is not ideally placed.

14...♗b4?! is the logical follow-up, trying to exploit 13...a5, but after something like 15.♘e2 a4? 16.g4 Black simply loses material.

15.♖fd1 ♗f5



16.♖3d2!?

At first this seemed somewhat unnatural to me, but Wesley judged (saying 'correctly' would be abusing my hindsight powers) that the direct way leads nowhere and the bishop on f5 could

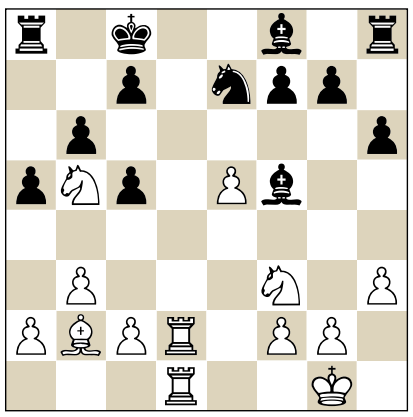
potentially be a target (♘d4/h4 or g4). 16.♖d8+ ♔b7 17.♖xa8 is definitely more tempting, but it is always the question whether White can profit from the short-term chaos that this rook exchange creates: 17...♔xa8 18.♘d4 (after 18.♖d8+ ♔b7 19.♘d4 ♗c8 the rook will get kicked out with ...c5/...♘c6, but there are also other ways to unpin, for example ...g6(g5)/...♗g7) 18...♗c8, and now the standard 19.e6 can be met by the no-less standard 19...f6, with an extremely double-edged position, where White has to try to use his huge lead in development as quickly as possible, since he is not doing so great in the long term. The e6-pawn can turn out to be a weakness and nobody is planning to neglect the good old 'two bishops'.

16...c5

This plan turns out to be not entirely ideal. The weakness of the b5-square generally does not do much harm, but combined with the vulnerability of the bishop on f5 (So he was wise when he played 16.♖3d2!)...

16...♔b7! looks more flexible, considering the fact that the knight would be better placed on g6 than on c6, where it will end up in the game.

17.♘b5

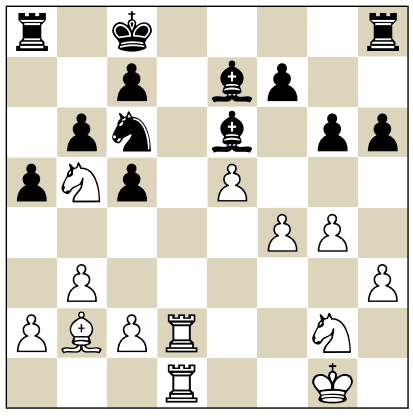


17...♘c6

17...♔b7 is now too late (with the idea of going ...♘g6, otherwise the move is fine, of course): 18.c4 ♘g6? 19.♖d7!, with massive compensation for the exchange.

18.♘h4! ♗e6 19.f4 g6 20.g4 ♗e7 21.♘g2

The knight is heading for e3, where it takes the vital squares g4 and f5 under control.

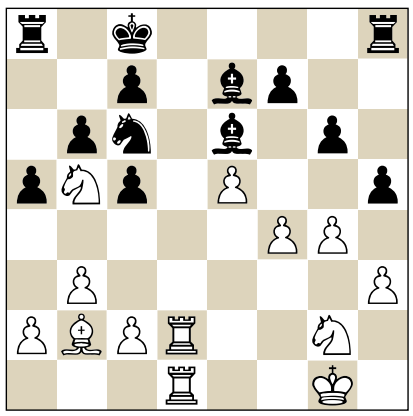


21...♔b7

Allowing the following tactic, but Black couldn't do everything.

After 21...♖g8 22.♘e3 ♔b7, 23.♔h2!, preparing f5, looks quite deadly: 23...♗c8 is good enough to stop it, but after the simple 24.a4! Black is way too passive. He was just not in time to get the a8-rook into the game.

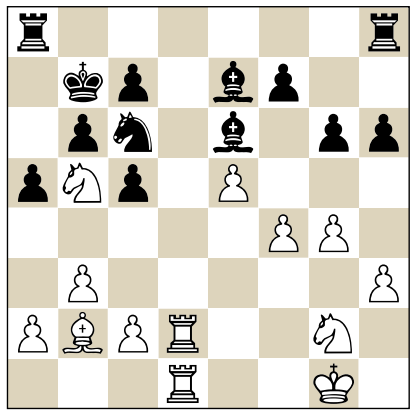
21...h5!? is interesting, but having to consider both ♘d6 and f5!? Vallejo probably judged it to be too dangerous:



ANALYSIS DIAGRAM

– 22.f5!? gxf5 23.gxf5 ♗xf5 24.e6 is very messy, but after 24...♘d4 (24...f6 25.♖d7 ♗d8 26.♗xf6! ♗xe6! 27.♖g7!) 25.exf7 ♖f8 the f7-pawn seems to be in trouble. However, after 26.♖f2 ♘xb5 (26...♗g6 27.♖e1!) 27.♖xf5 ♘d6 28.♖xd6!? ♗xd6 29.♘h4 it is still White who is fighting for an advantage, as the exchange will eventually be won back and the h-pawn will fall.

– 22.♘d6+ ♗xd6!? 23.exd6 ♘d4, and it all works out for Black, as the position will eventually simplify into equality.



22.♘d6+!

A nice cheapo, which, even though it doesn't seem deadly (which, in fact, it isn't), secures White a stable edge.

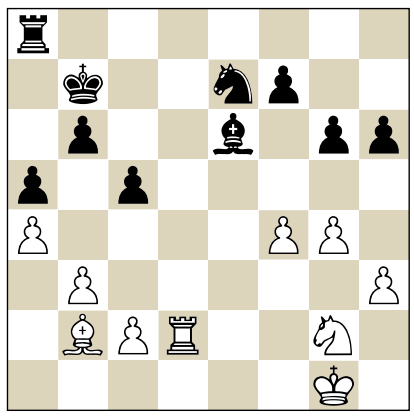
22.♘e3 is slow, since after 22...h5 it will be hard for White to get his pawns rolling.

22...cxd6 23.exd6 ♖hd8 24.dxe7 ♖xd2 25.♖xd2 ♘xe7

The position looks almost equal, but now Wesley shows class.

26.a4

Stopping the counterplay with ...a5-a4 once and for all. White is planning to regroup his pieces and start touching Black's kingside pawns.



26...♘c6?

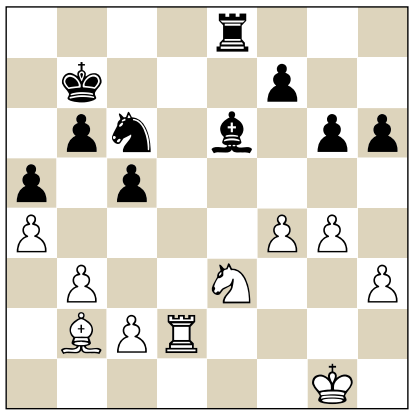
A mistake. Black desperately needed to stop ♘e3.

Havana 2014				cat. XIX
				TPR
1 So	PHI	2731	6½	2829
2 Bruzon	CUB	2682	5½	2765
3 Dominguez	CUB	2768	5	2711
4 Almasi	HUN	2693	4½	2690
5 Vallejo	ESP	2700	4½	2689
6 Ivanchuk	UKR	2753	4	2642

26...c4? is typical in this structure, but the problem is surprisingly simple: after 27.bxc4 Black is just not able to recapture the pawn, as ♖d7+ is there, once the bishop captures, and if 27...♖c8 then 28.♘e3.

26...♔c6! is very strong, preparing to meet ♘e3 with ...♘d5: 27.c4, and now taking care of the other problem – the d-file: 27...♖a7!, followed by ...♖d7, when the game is likely to end in a draw.

27.♘e3! ♖e8



28.♔f2!

Of course. Now White has a very harmonious set-up.

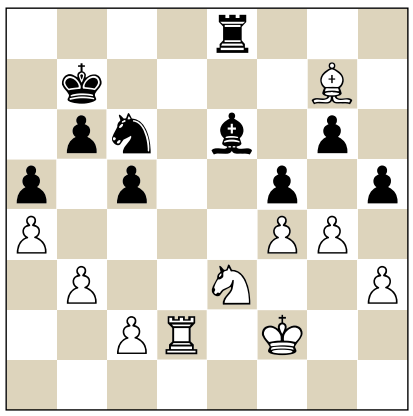
28...f5

This was probably how Vallejo was hoping to hold the position. However, White is in control here.

29.♗g7!

Provoking some extra weaknesses.

29...h5

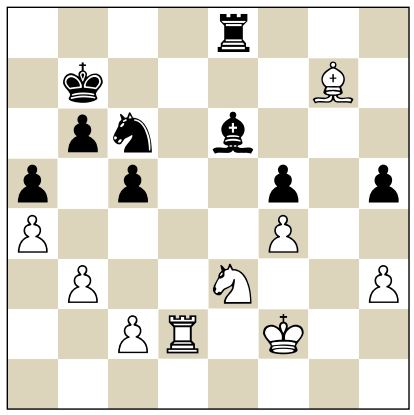


30.gxh5

A strong player always knows which pawn to capture. Here it's quite obvious, giving Black no chance to recapture on f5 with the bishop. Perhaps this was the main purpose of ♗g7.

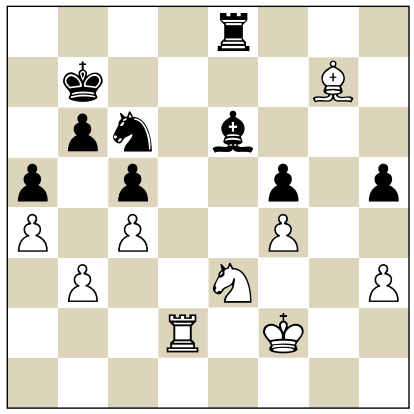
30...gxh5

Now White has a superb position. His pieces are very well placed and Black's h5- and f5-pawns are potentially quite weak. There is no counterplay whatsoever. One question, though, remains: how to win? Note that 31.♔g3 will be met by 31...♗xb3!.



31.c4?!

Since Black had no chance of getting ...c5-c4 in, this move seems somewhat unnecessary, but of course it is quite hard to see when the 'weakness' of the b3-pawn will tell. The more realistic argument against it, however, is that the option of a potential ♘c4 is gone.

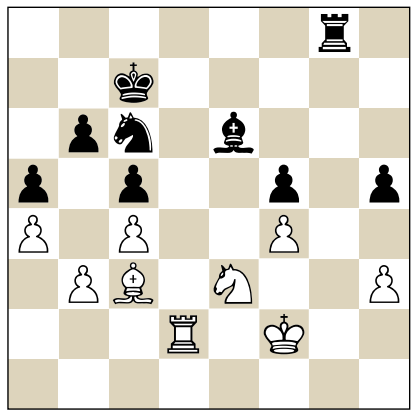


31...♖g8?!

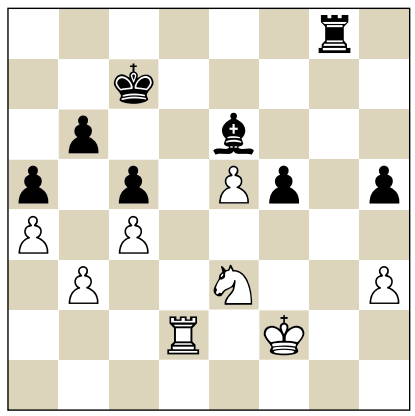
31...♗c8! was a better set-up, with some tricks with ...♖e4, ...♘d4 in mind: 32.♗c3 (32.♔f3 doesn't stop the counterplay: 32...h4!? 33.♗f6 ♘d4+!? 34.♗xd4 cxd4 35.♖xd4 ♖g8!) 32...♖e4 33.♔f3 ♘d4+!? (the simple 33...♘e7 is quite hard to crack, too. Black's rook seems quite useless on e4, but in fact it keeps the king attached to the knight and the ♗e5 no longer blocks the e-file) 34.♗xd4 ♖xd4 35.♖xd4 cxd4 36.♘c2 ♔c6 37.♘xd4+ ♔c5 38.♔e3 h4!, and a draw is the most likely result.

32.♗c3 ♔c7

32...♖d8? doesn't work: 33.♖xd8 ♘xd8 34.♔g3! ♗d7 35.♔h4 ♘e6 36.♗e5 ♘d4 37.♔xh5 ♘xb3 and although Black has generated some counterplay, he will not be in time, as the h-pawn is a good runner.

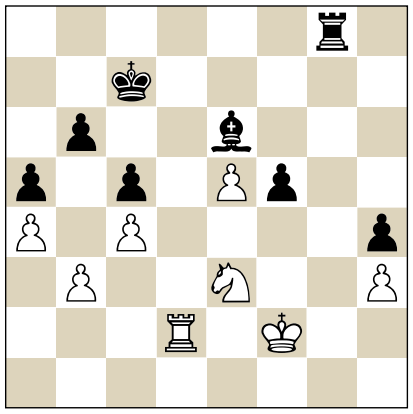


33.♗e5+!? The right idea to break Black's fortress, but in fact there is a defence. **33...♘xe5 34.fxe5**

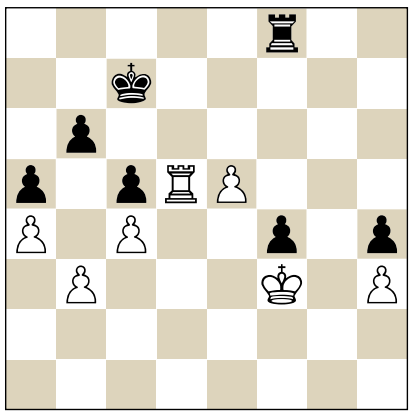


34...h4?? This move loses for many reasons, but the problem for the defender was that 34...f4! appears to lose as well...

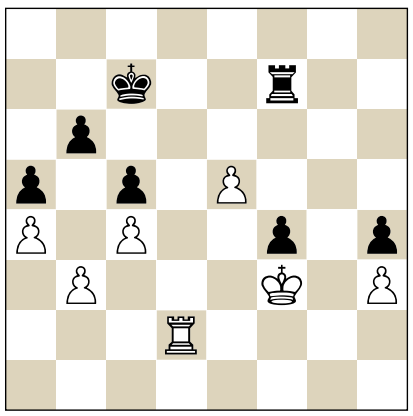
34...f4! 35.♘d5+ (35.♘g2 ♖g5! is quite trivial. Here White can still try to come up with something, but Black should hold. For example 36.♘xf4 ♖xe5 37.♘xe6+ ♖xe6 38.♖d5 ♖f6+ 39.♔g3 ♖f1! 40.♖xh5 ♖b1, with enough counterplay to secure the draw) 35...♗xd5 36.cxd5, and this position looks dead lost, but in fact it's not: 36...♖g3! 37.d6+ ♔d8! 38.e6 ♖xh3!, and Black miraculously survives: 39.e7+ (39.♖d1 ♖e3!) 39...♔d7 40.♖e2 ♖h2+ 41.♔f3 ♖xe2 42.♔xe2 h4!, and Black is just in time to create the 'untouchable' pawns: 43.♔f3 h3 44.♔f2 ♔e8 45.♔f3 ♔d7, with a draw.



35.♖d6 The most technical move, keeping Black passive.
35.♘d5+ ♗xd5 36.cxd5 ♖g3 37.d6+ ♔d8 38.e6 ♖xh3 39.♖d1 wins easily. There is nothing to stop the pawns from queening! The threat is 40.e7+ ♔d7 41.♖e1!.
35...♖e8 36.♔f3 f4 37.♘d5+!
Keeping it clean.
37...♗xd5+ 38.♖xd5 ♖f8



And now Wesley does it with elegance.
39.♖d2 ♖f7 40.♖d1 ♖f8 41.♖d2 ♖f7 Or 41...♖f5 42.e6 ♖e5 43.♖e2 winning.



42.e6!
And since all possible pawn endings are lost, Black had no choice but to resign. A beautiful display of understanding by the Filipino.

LENNART OOTES

The field in St. Louis. (l. to r.) Sergey Erenburg, Alexander Lenderman, Varuzhan Akobian, Timur Gareev, Alejandro Ramirez, Mac Molner, Alexander Onischuk, Gata Kamsky, Ray Robson, Josh Friedel, Daniel Naroditsky and Sam Shankland.

St. Louis

The U.S. Championship is one tournament I hardly look forward to. And why should I? As Hikaru Nakamura seems to have enough of national titles, there is basically only one real top player competing, Gata Kamsky, and his games always take the same course: with White his bishop appears on f4 either on move 2, 3, 4 or 5, with Black there are awkward hybrids of the Slav and the Grünfeld, and then eventually he might win or he might not.

When the tournament starts, though, it's a whole different story. The broadcast featuring the nighttime American voices of Yasser Seirawan and Jennifer Shahade is exactly what I am looking forward to before going to bed, and the bishop on f4 with the stone-cold face of its owner in the background once again captivates me. And I am not even talking about the young Americans that introduce new creative ideas every round. Towards the end of the tournament the lullaby has turned into a full movie.

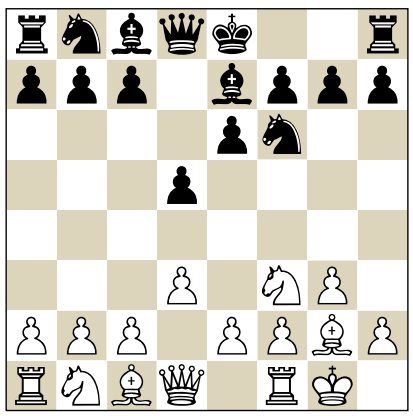
This year the odds-on favourite Kamsky started off slowly. It was the talented and friendly Aleksandr Lenderman who was leading the pack. That was until Kamsky inflicted a heavy blow upon the ambitious young man. Following one more defeat, Lenderman came back with two good wins and was back in the fight for first place. Varuzhan Akobian also suddenly showed great fighting spirit. After a long series of draws he won a dramatic game against Gareev, won some more games and joined the fight for first place. Before the final round it was like in the best thrillers. The leaders, Akobian and Lenderman, were facing each other, and the heavyweight, Kamsky, was half a point behind. And obviously it was a three-way tie! Quite remarkably, the same situation arose in the Women's championship, where Irina Krush, Anna Zatonskih and Tatev Abrahamyan were the names. Eventually the favourites, Kamsky and Krush, once again took home the title.

In the semi-final of the play-off Akobian played a great game against Lenderman, but in the final against Kamsky he was clearly too afraid of his experienced opponent. I can understand. Kamsky is not just a strong rapid player, he also exudes aggression at the board, which is very hard to withstand without enough experience at this level.

NOTES BY
Anish Giri

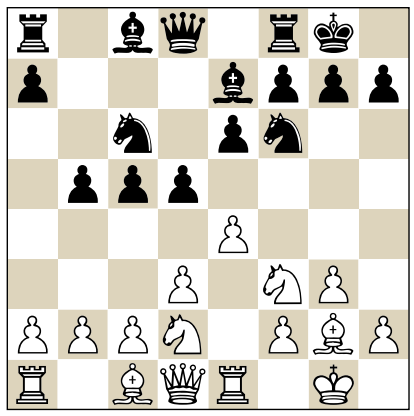
RE 24.14 – C00
Gata Kamsky
Alexander Lenderman
St. Louis 2014 (7)

1.♘f3 d5 2.g3
When in sideline mode, Gata Kamsky usually prefers the London System (d4, ♗f4 etc.), but for this game he went for the King's Indian Attack, which basically means that you play the King's Indian Defence, but since you have a tempo more (being White), you don't need to defend your Indian King. Instead, you can start attacking right away.
2...♘f6 3.♗g2 e6 4.0-0 ♗e7 5.d3
It was still possible to transpose to the Catalan, but that was not Kamsky's intention.

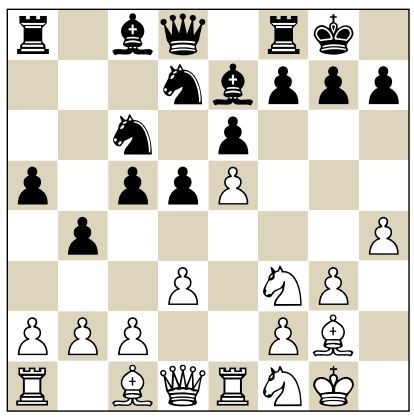


5...0-0!
Since the game Svidler-Karjakin from the Candidates' this year, in which Svidler shocked Sergey with 5...c5 6.e4!, 5...0-0 is considered to be the correct move order.

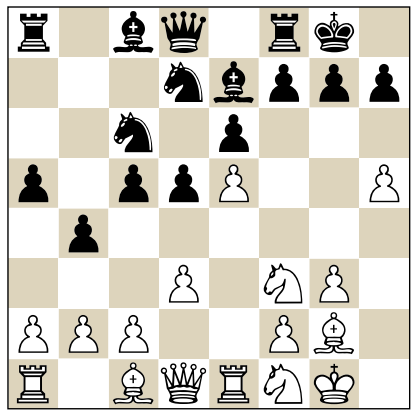
6.♘bd2 c5 7.e4 ♘c6 8.♖e1 b5



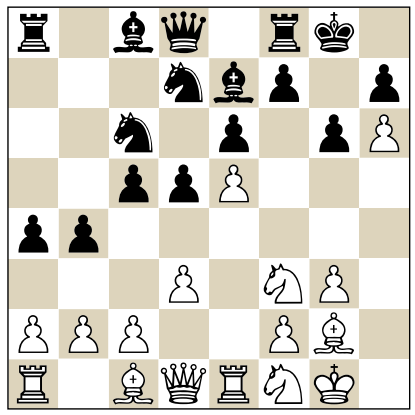
9.e5
The main branch, in which White is really going for the king. The other way to play is taking on d5, either after a4 or before: 9.exd5 exd5 10.a4 b4 11.d4!? can be recommended for those who don't like burning bridges and prefer playing in the centre.
9...♘d7 10.♘f1 b4 11.h4 a5



12.h5!?
I believe this is a modern way to treat the position, but once again, my age makes me pretty much unqualified to confidently talk about historical trends. What I do know is that the good old 'mating' plan is ♘1h2, ♗f4, ♘g5, ♕h5, trying to provoke ...h6 and then eventually sacrificing on h6, prepared with ♘hg4.
Having said that, I have to confess that Black is most likely going to be able to defend against this assault by playing ...♕e8! after White has completed the first part of his plan, meeting ♕h5 with ...h6 and then following up with the sexy ...f5!, which cannot be taken en passant, since the queen exchange is offered.



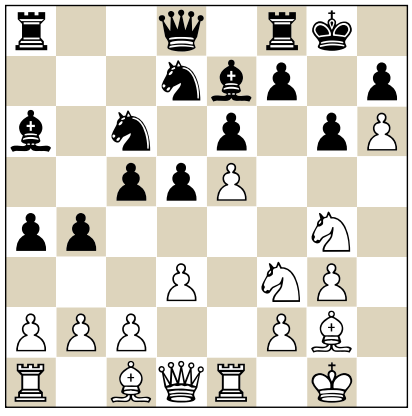
12...a4
An important strategic decision.
12...h6 is a completely different approach. Black once and for all saves himself from the long-term strategic problems which arose in this game, but invites White to eventually sacrifice a piece on h6. It requires deep analysis to tell which method is better, but for all I know, the rapid game Grischuk-Dominguez, which followed this course, was a masterpiece by the Cuban, who accepted the sacrifice and eventually went on to win after a swift counterattack, topped with a queen sacrifice at the end. A must-see.
13.h6 g6



This structure is known to me from a blitz game Nakamura-Leko (1-0), and later on I managed to beat Peter in similar fashion in a blitz game, too (although my game was a lot less convincing). Recently, in the final round in Poikovsky, Nepo managed to beat Jakovenko with this as well, so, statistically speaking at least, Black is under pressure in this line.
14.♘1h2!?
I was 'taught' that White usually has

to meet the pawn assault with a2-a3!, but Kamsky decided to challenge that dogma.

14...♗a6 15.♘g4

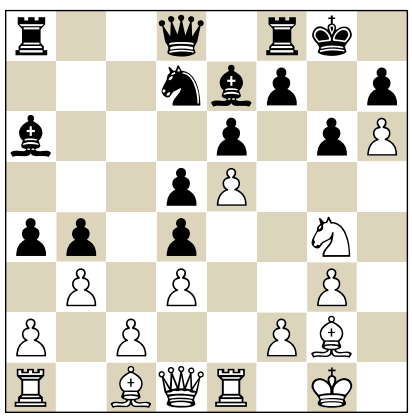


Quite a complex position. White isn't really threatening mate, but neither has Black really succeeded in creating weaknesses on the queenside. In the end, how the model games in this line go (this one, Nepo-Jakovenko and Nakamura-Leko) is that sooner or later the queenside opens up and in the endgame the weakness of the back rank turns out to be fatal for Black.

15...♘d4

A standard manoeuvre in these positions, but I have to say they are way too complicated to just give an assessment of a major decision like this one. All I remember from my blitz game with Peter Leko is that I made a pretty talented knight pirouette with ♘f1-e3-g4-h2, so in that respect Kamsky has done a pretty good job, preparing for ...♘d4.

16.♘xd4 cxd4 17.b3!?



17...a3?

Preventing ♗b2, but this looks way too passive.

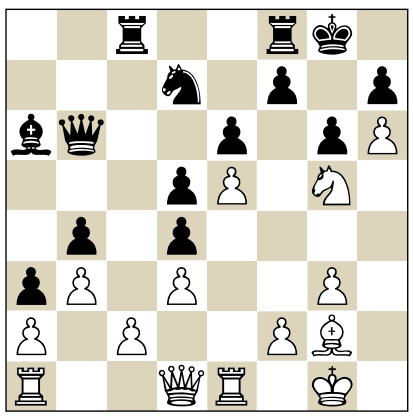
LENNART OOTES

Gata Kamsky, who else? Despite a hesitant start the top-seed won his fifth U.S. title.

18.♘h2

Now it is up to White to show how he is going to win it. Black has to sit and wait, while White must make sure the c2-pawn is protected and then slowly try to regroup his pieces in order to capture the d4-pawn.

18...♖c8 19.♘f3 ♕b6 20.♗g5 ♗xg5 21.♘xg5



21...♖c6

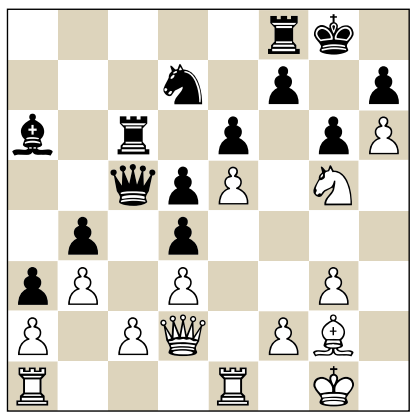
Black is doomed after 21...♖c3, trying to attack the c2-pawn with all his pieces. In fact, the black king is too weak to really generate any threat to the little pawn: 22.♗h3 ♕c6 23.♖c1 ♗b5 (23...♖c8 24.♕f3!) 24.♕d2 ♗a6 25.♔g2 ♗b5 26.♕f4 (attaching the queen to the d4-pawn) 26...♕c5 (26...♖xc2 27.♖xc2 ♕xc2 28.♖c1 is of course going to be mate after ♖c8) 27.♖ed1 ♗a6 28.♖d2 ♗b5 29.♘f3, and the d4-pawn is lost.

The toughest set-up seems to be with the black queen protecting the f7-pawn, while the rooks go for the c-file: 21...♕d8! 22.♕d2 ♖c3 23.♖ac1 ♕e7 24.♗h3 (24.♘f3 ♕c5) 24...♖fc8, but I believe Kamsky would have found a way to break this position. Black's position looks too miserable to be defensible.

22.♕d2

It was possible to try and keep the c2-pawn under control with 22.♖c1!?, but, as Gata correctly judged, there was no need to pay too much attention to it.

22...♕c5



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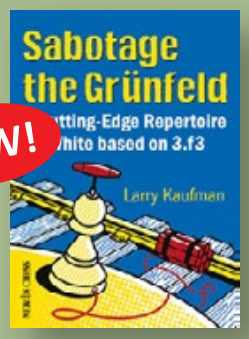

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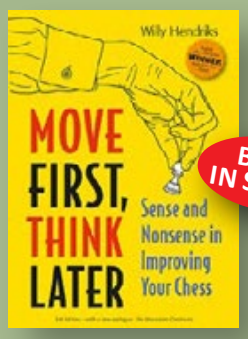

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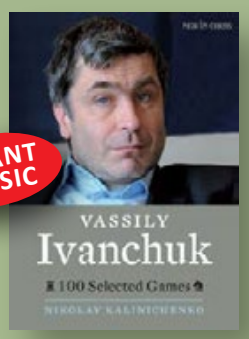

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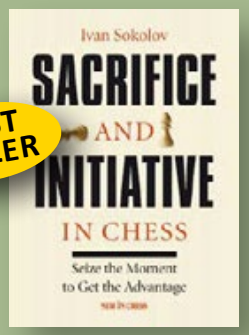

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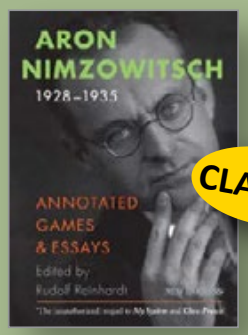

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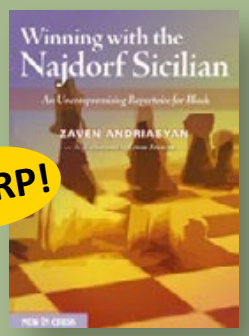

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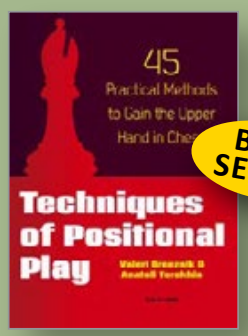

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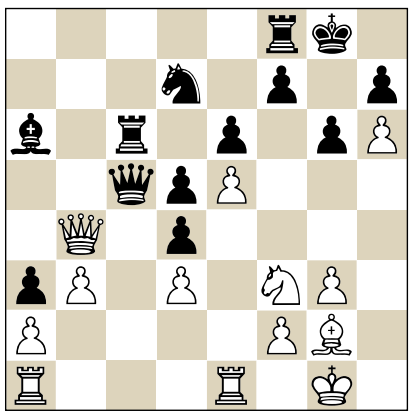
23.♘f3

23.♖ac1 ♕c3 allows some counterplay, although even here, after 24.♕d1, Black can't go 24...♕b2 due to 25.c4!, so he has no real play. Having said that, getting the queen to c3 is certainly an achievement. So Kamsky rightly decided that there was no need to be shy and it was already time to cash in.

23...♕xc2 24.♕xb4 ♕c5

24...♕xd3 is just bad. White can either capture the a3-pawn or go all out for an attack with ♕e7 and ♘g5.



25.♕d2!

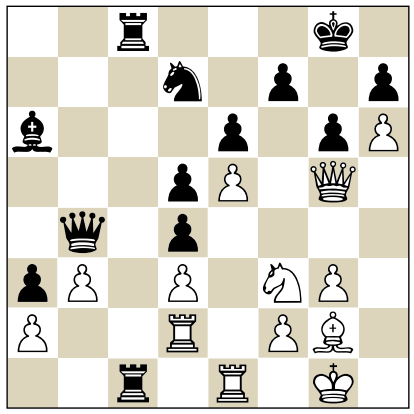
There is no need to enter even a better endgame, as White can keep things under control: eventually the d4-pawn will fall by itself.

25...♖fc8 26.♖ad1 ♕b6 27.♕g5!

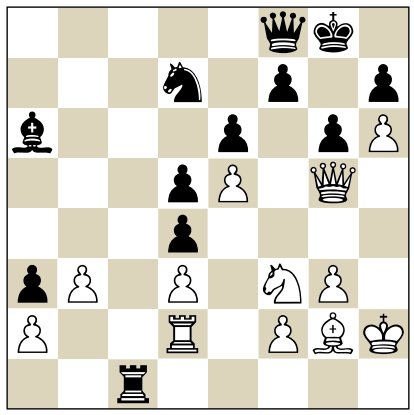
♕e7 is on the agenda now.

27...♕b4 28.♖d2 ♖c1

Black can't generate any real counterplay, since both his queen and his knight are tied down to protect against the threats.



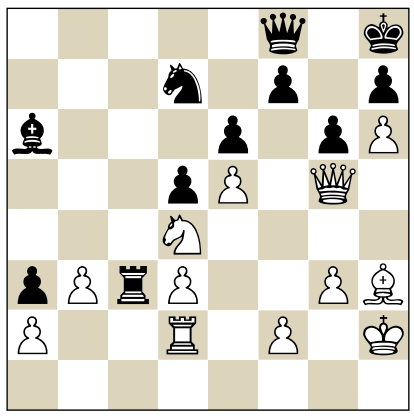
29.♖xc1 ♖xc1+ 30.♔h2 ♕f8



31.♗h3! White is alert. 31.♘xd4?? ♘xe5! would have been painful.

31...♖c3 32.♘xd4 ♔h8

Now a bang on e6 would have decided, but Gata keeps it 'lazy'.

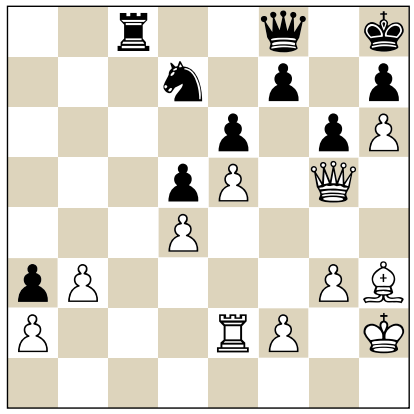


33.♘e2

33.♗xe6! fxe6 34.♘xe6 ♕e8 35.♘f4, followed by e6, is winning. Note that the e5-pawn is invulnerable due to the mating net.

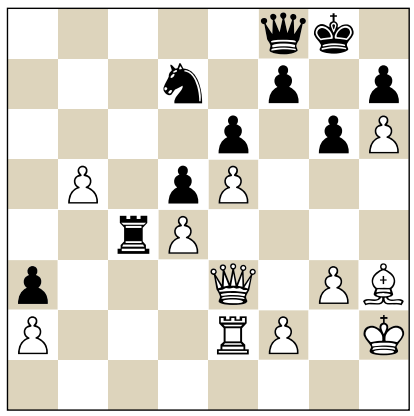
33...♖c8 34.d4 ♗xe2 35.♖xe2

Now Black might have had some hope. Imagine the knight landing on b4, and the bishop on h3 looks quite harmless... But no illusions. Black is a pawn down and his pieces are pinned down by the h6-pawn.



35...♔g8 35...♘b8 is met by 36.b4!.

36.♕d2 ♘b8 37.b4 ♖c4 38.b5 ♘d7 39.♕e3

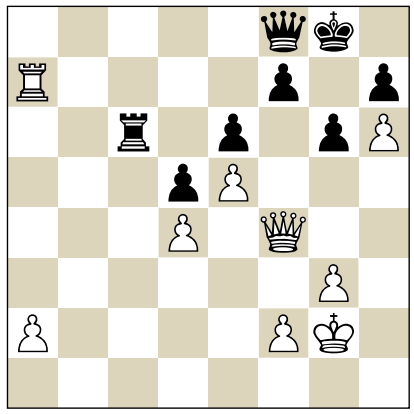


It's just a technical win and Gata clinches it.

39...♕b4 40.♖d2 ♖c8 41.♖d3 ♕xb5 42.♖xa3 ♕b6 43.♗f1 ♕d8 44.♖a7 ♘b8 45.♕f4 ♕f8 46.♗b5

Black is completely paralysed.

46...♘c6 47.♗xc6 ♖xc6 48.♔g2!



Black resigned. An elegant finish. Black's position is utterly hopeless. White can choose his win, the easiest one being the pawn push, eventually reaching a8. ■

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				TPR
1 Kamsky	USA	2713	7	2702
2 Lenderman	USA	2582	7	2714
3 Akobian	USA	2643	7	2709
4 Shankland	USA	2634	6	2644
5 Naroditsky	USA	2543	6	2652
6 Onischuk	USA	2668	5½	2604
7 Friedel	USA	2505	5½	2619
8 Robson	USA	2631	5½	2608
9 Gareev	USA	2653	4½	2541
10 Erenburg	USA	2633	4½	2543
11 Ramirez	USA	2595	4	2509
12 Molner	USA	2522	3½	2485

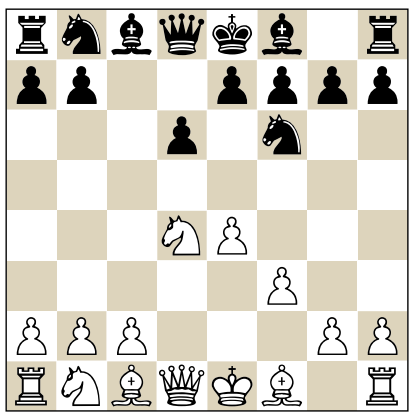
In the 'semi-final' of the tiebreak Akobian beat Lenderman. In the final Kamsky beat Akobian.

Sadler on Books

The wish to play f3 in the opening

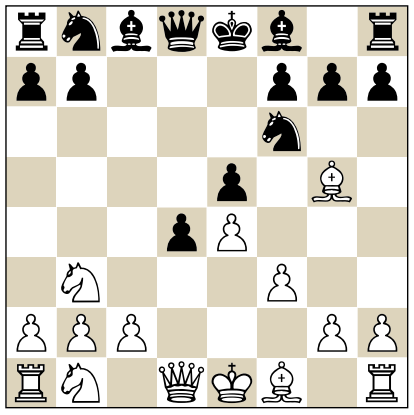
You may notice a common theme running through the opening books we will have a look at this time: they all advocate an early f3! The move f3 for me conjures up a scene 15 years ago during a Bundesliga evening meal. I'd just finished reviewing a copy of Hans Berliner's *The System* and had been put off by the tone of the book and by some of the strange recommendations. I complained to Artur Yusupov next to me with heavy sarcasm that Berliner just wanted to play f3 with White in any position. 'Amazing,' said Artur in that deadpan manner of his, 'I've been doing that all my life.'

We start with a quirky opening book by Sergey Kasparov covering 'his' variation 1.e4 c5 2.♘f3 d6 3.d4 cxd4 4.♘xd4 ♘f6 5.f3 (including Black's attempt to sidestep the line with 3...♘f6).



The book is entitled ***Steamrolling the Sicilian***, which to me conjured up visions of flattening Black in dashing style... However, the author explains that it means you're going to win very very slowly! One little warning: this line is only possible against the 2...d6 Sicilian. 2...♘c6 and 2...e6 are not covered by this repertoire. I read the book cover to cover during a one-hour train journey and I enjoyed it greatly. The author lightens up the text with non-chess digressions and little flashes of humour, while I was pretty surprised at how much information had stuck from that first whizz through the pages. I felt the author had done a particularly good job in bringing across the little move order tricks you need to navigate the early stages of the opening. So, the book is definitely recommended. But I'm not sure about the opening! That move 5.f3 is amazingly slow. White is aiming to set up a Maroczy Bind with c4, but Black has an immediate way to counter White's intention by playing 5...e5 followed by ...d5. Moreover, even after playing c4 and ♘c3, White's grip on d5 is still very weak. After 5...e6 6.c4 ♘c6 7.♘c3 ♗e7 8.♗e3 0-0, Black is threatening to play ...d5 without any loss of material.

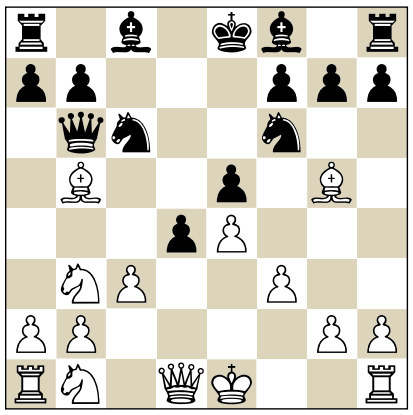
One thing I couldn't get my head around was the sheer number of Black players who went for the endings after 5...e5 6.♘b3 d5 7.♗g5 dxe4 8.♕xd8+ ♔xd8 9.fxe4 or 7...♗e6 8.♗xf6 gxf6 9.exd5 ♕xd5 10.♕xd5 ♗xd5 (covered in the first chapter, attractively entitled 'The Boring Ending'). 2... d6 players are Najdorf or Dragon addicts, the kind of square-jawed, steely-eyed daredevils who will leave their king in the centre and sacrifice material at the drop of a hat. Why are these guys playing for a draw after 5.f3?! It's especially strange because Black has a very natural way of playing for the initiative with 5...e5 6.♘b3 d5 7.♗g5 d4.



White will challenge the d4-pawn with c3, but even if White wins the d4-pawn, Black has great chances of play on the weakened dark-squares around the f3- and e4-pawns. The loose position of the bishop on g5 also makes it likely that Black will manage to net the bishop pair. In the database the only strong player who had tried it (successfully) was Nick De Firmian. S.Kasparov mentions the line very briefly but his comments are... enigmatic. He states that he had struggled against it in blitz but after showing Mastrovasilis-Chochenko, 2007, which continued 8.c3 ♘c6 9.♗b5 ♗e6 10.cxd4 ♗xb3 11.♕xb3 ♕xd4 12.♗e3, he concludes that

'the advance ...d5-d4 does not solve Black's opening problems.' I spent a little time looking at 9...♕b6 (9...h6, as played by De Firmian and also by Kobese in 2013 against S.Kasparov himself, is also dangerous) and White needs to be extremely careful.

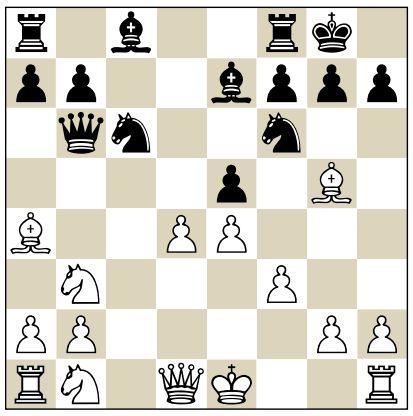
1.e4 c5 2.♘f3 d6 3.d4 cxd4 4.♘xd4 ♘f6 5.f3 e5 6.♘b3 d5 7.♗g5 d4 8.c3 ♘c6 9.♗b5 ♕b6



10.♗xc6+

The most consistent idea.

10.♗a4 was my attempt to improve things. It doesn't look that good though!: 10...♗e7 11.cxd4 0-0 (this is really dangerous. 11...exd4 12.♕xd4 is the idea behind ♗a4: White can take the pawn on d4 without a preliminary ♗xc6+ opening the a6-f1 diagonal for the bishop on c8):



A) 12.d5 ♘xe4 13.fxe4 ♗xg5 14.dxc6. I thought White might just be OK here – after all Black's attack seems a long way away – but Houdini loves it. I guess that ♗a4 is not adding much to White's position, either defensively or attackingly!

B) 12.♗xc6 bxc6 13.0-0 (13.dxe5 ♘xe4) 13...♗a6 14.♖e1 ♖ad8 is pretty pleasant for Black;

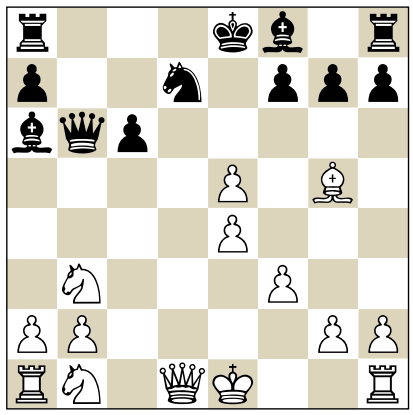
C) 12.♘c3 exd4 13.♗xf6 dxc3 14.♗xc3 ♖d8 15.♕e2 ♘b4 offers good compensation for Black.

10...bxc6 11.cxd4 ♗a6 12.dxe5

Again the most consistent.

12...♘d7

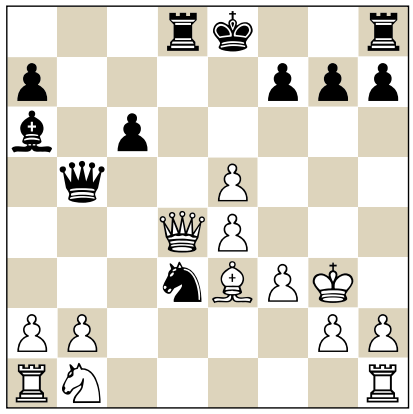
Apart from ...♘xe5, ...h6 or ...♗e7 is also a very awkward threat when the bishop will most likely have to retreat to d2 or c1.



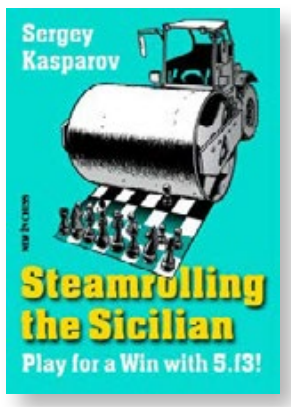
13.♕d4

This looks crucial. 13.♕d2 ♘xe5 14.♗e3 ♕c7 15.♔f2 ♗d6 16.g3 0-0 17.♕a5 ♕xa5 18.♘xa5 f5 19.♔g2 fxe4 20.fxe4 ♘g4 21.♖e1 ♗b4 0-1, Nieto-Piceu, Belgium 2010.

13...♗c5 14.♘xc5 ♘xc5 15.♗e3 ♕b5 16.♔f2 ♘d3+ 17.♔g3 ♖d8



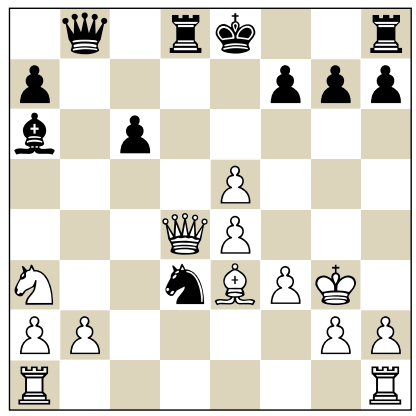
Steamrolling the Sicilian
Play for a Win with 5.f3!
by Sergey Kasparov
New In Chess, 2013



18.♘a3

I had high hopes for 18.♘c3 ♕xb2 19.♖ab1 ♕c2 20.♕xa7 ♕xc3 21.♕xa6 ♕xe5+ 22.♔h4, but Houdini thinks that Black has a slight advantage!

18...♕b8



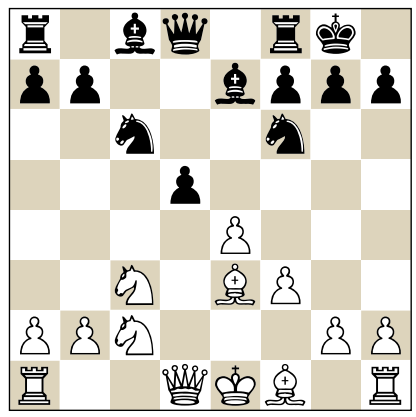
Well I thought this was virtually game over. Houdini assesses the position as equal! I think it's clear though who's having more fun!

The line after 5...e6 6.c4 ♘c6 7.♘c3 ♗e7 8.♗e3 0-0 is also a little headache for White. The point is that after 9.♘c2, Black can play Fischer's excellent pawn sacrifice 9...d5 (strangely enough, Fischer was fairly pessimistic about its objective value in *My 60 Memorable Games*!).

S.Kasparov again is a little vague regarding the value of this move, merely mentioning that it seems to be played infrequently.

As far as I can see, Black gets an excellent position.

1.e4 c5 2.♘f3 d6 3.d4 cxd4 4.♘xd4 ♘f6 5.f3 ♘c6 6.c4 e6 7.♘c3 ♗e7 8.♗e3 0-0 9.♘c2 d5 10.cxd5 exd5



11.exd5

This is just good for Black, according to S.Kasparov: 11.♘xd5 ♘xd5 12.♕xd5 ♕c7 13.♕b5 ♗d7 14.♖c1 ♘b4 15.♘xb4 ♕xc1+ 16.♗xc1 ♗xb5 17.♘d5 ♗h4+ 18.g3 ♗xf1 19.♖xf1 ♗d8 won the exchange in Lombardy-Fischer, New York 1960.

11...♘b4

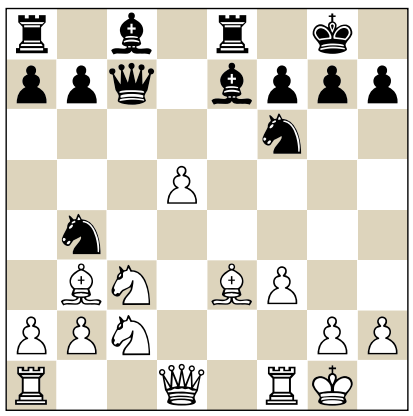
You really get a Karpov-Kasparov, 16th game, feeling when you see this line!

12.♗c4 ♕c7

12...♗f5 13.♘xb4 ♗xb4 14.0-0 ♖c8 was the line that Fischer gave in *My 60 Memorable Games*, when he considers that 'Black regains his pawn but with an inferior position'.

12...b5 is another interesting idea. Houdini liked it too after a bit of prompting: 13.♗b3 ♘xc2+ 14.♕xc2 b4 15.♘e2 ♘xd5 and this looks fine for Black too.

13.♗b3 ♖e8 14.0-0



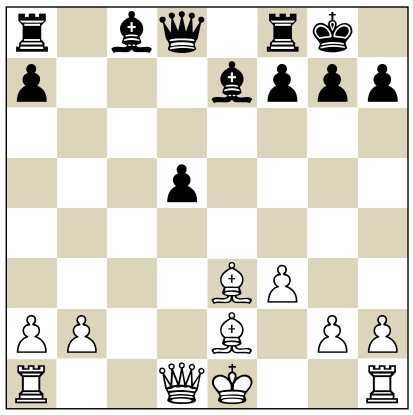
14...♗d6

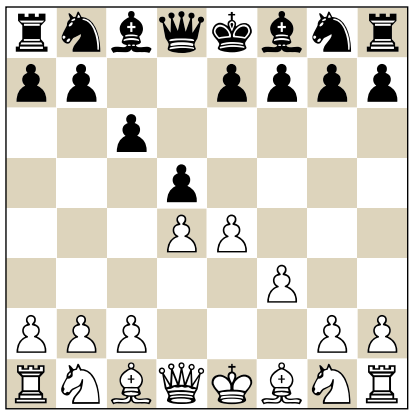
This looks a little more accurate than 14...♘xc2 15.♕xc2 ♗d6 as played in Westerinen-Colovic, Balaguer 2005 (given in the book), as White has more difficulty playing ♘e4.

In any case, Black is doing pretty well here.

So it seems that White has to allow ...d5 and go for a tiny nibble with 9.♗e2.

1.e4 c5 2.♘f3 d6 3.d4 cxd4 4.♘xd4 ♘f6 5.f3 ♘c6 6.c4 e6 7.♘c3 ♗e7 8.♗e3 0-0 9.♗e2 d5 10.exd5 exd5 11.♘xc6 bxc6 12.cxd5 ♘xd5 13.♘xd5 cxd5





This is not very exciting. In principle, Black should be fine here:

1. The absence of knights makes Black's position much safer. A knight on d4 would be a pain for Black, threatening to come in to c6, for example.
2. The pawn on f3 stops White from putting pressure on d5 with a bishop on the h1-a8 diagonal. The weakness of the kingside caused by the f3-pawn also makes a perpetual more likely if White were ever to win the d5-pawn.
3. The half-open b-file gives Black an extra way of generating counterplay (together with ...a5-a4) and activating his rook (via b4 for example... remember that famous Petrosian-Spassky game from the 1969 World Championship?).
4. White doesn't have any significant lead in development so he can't extract any extra concessions from Black before Black gets organised.

To summarise, a good book that will definitely help you pick up the main ideas of this opening very quickly. To make a complete repertoire against 2...d6 though, you will need something against 5...e5 6.♘b3 d5 7.♗g5 d4 and you also need to understand that the chances of a draw are very high if Black plays 5...e6 6.c4 ♘c6 7.♘c3 ♗e7 8.♗e3 0-0 9.♗e2 d5.

Next up is ***The Extreme Caro-Kann*** by Alexey Bezgodov, covering 1.e4 c6 2.d4 d5 3.f3.

Again a very impressive book. I'm no expert on the variation but it's clear that Bezgodov has put a huge amount of original effort into the book.

Bezgodov presents masses of original analysis on the many crazy sharp lines such as 3...dxe4 4.fxe4 e5 5.♘f3 or 3...e5 4.dxe5 ♗c5. At times it feels like you're playing through a book of King's Gambit games!

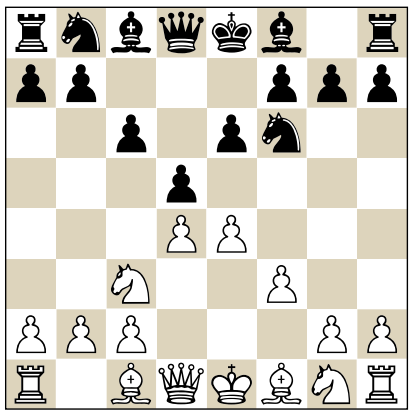
If I have a quibble about the book, it's on the quieter lines. I was reading through the excellent book of the Botvinnik-Smyslov World Championship matches and I came across the 15th game of the 1958 match. Smyslov, trailing by 4 points already at that stage, decided to take on Botvinnik's Caro-Kann with 3.f3. I have to say I was quite shocked that such a positional player as Smyslov should play such an eccentric move. However as Bezgodov points out, 3.f3 does have a sound positional basis: the pawn on f3 helps White maintain his pawn on e4 and thus negates Black's main idea in the Caro-Kann (which is to punch a hole in White's double pawn centre and thus gain a development square for his light-squared bishop). Botvinnik replied with 3...e6 and he annotated this move as follows: 'The correct defensive plan consisting of 3...e6 followed by ...♕b6 and ...c5 was introduced by Makogonov, after which the whole variation practically disappeared from practice. The subtlety of the Black plan resides in the fact that thanks to the weakening move f2-f3, Black has nothing to fear from the isolation of his d5-pawn.'

A typically categorical assessment from the old man, but spot on in my opinion. I would also add that b6 is an

especially good square for the queen when White has played f3 as it cuts across the weakened a7-g1 diagonal in addition to the normal pressure on b2 and d4. The attack on d4 is particularly annoying as White does not have the normal protecting square f3 for his knight.

As you can see, Botvinnik rapidly built up an overwhelming position:

1.e4 c6 2.d4 d5 3.f3 e6 4.♘c3 ♘f6



5.♗g5

5.e5 ♘fd7 6.f4 c5 transposes back to a 3.♘c3 ♘f6 4.e5 French and is the line that Bezgodov recommends for White (although he doesn't cover this French line in his book).

As an aside, this seems like a missed opportunity for Smyslov. After all, Botvinnik was famous for playing the Winawer against 3.♘c3 and he played 3...♘f6 only very rarely.

On the other hand, Smyslov always played 4.♗g5 against 3...♘f6 instead of 4.e5, so he would also have been on unfamiliar territory.

5...h6 6.♗h4 ♕b6 7.a3 c5 8.♘ge2 ♘c6 9.dxc5 ♗xc5 10.♘a4 ♕a5+ 11.♘ec3 ♗e7

Is this really Smyslov playing White?!

Botvinnik's move order allowed White to transpose back into a main line French, but Black has a number of other move orders to implement this plan without allowing the transposition.

1.e4 c6 2.d4 d5 3.f3 ♕b6

3...e6 4.♘c3 ♕b6 is another alternative, transposing to 3...♕b6 4.♘c3 e6.

4.♘c3

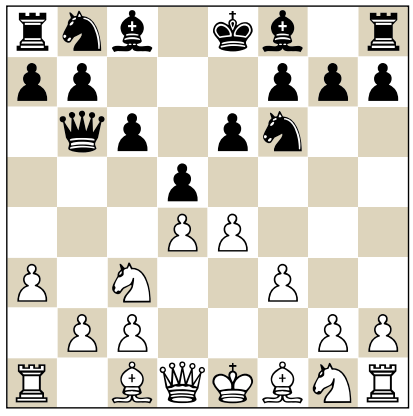
The best according to Bezgodov.

4...e6

This seems like a clever way to apply Botvinnik's concept without giving White an easy way to transpose back into a main line French. It's been tried by a few strong players already.

5.a3 ♘f6

5...♘d7 is an interesting line – avoiding 6.♗g5 after 5...♘f6 – 6.♗e3 ♗d6 7.♔f2 ♘e7 8.♘ge2 0-0 9.♘a4 ♕d8 10.e5 ♗b8 11.♔g1 f6 and this was pleasant for Black in Bellia-Svetushkin, Rethymnon 2010.



6.♗e3

6.e5 ♘fd7 7.f4 (7.b4 is maybe the best try) 7...c5 8.♘f3 ♘c6 9.♗e3 transposes to a non-critical line of the ...♕b6 French; 6.♗g5 h6 7.♗xf6 (7.♗h4 c5 transposes to Smyslov-Botvinnik!) 7...gxf6 could be quite interesting. If White plays 8.♖b1 then 8...e5 is aggressive and seems strong to me. It reminds me a little of a game I once witnessed between Tony Miles and Stuart Conquest which went 1.d4 d5 2.♗g5 ♘f6 3.♗xf6 gxf6 4.e3 c5 5.c3 e5. Stuart won a brilliant game just by bombing the white central dark squares and this feels pretty much the same.

6...♘bd7 7.♖b1 dxe4 8.fxe4 e5 9.♘f3 ♗d6 10.♕d2 ♕c7 11.♗c4 0-0 12.0-0 exd4 13.♗xd4 ♘e5

This looked very pleasant for Black in Das-Roiz, Biel 2012.

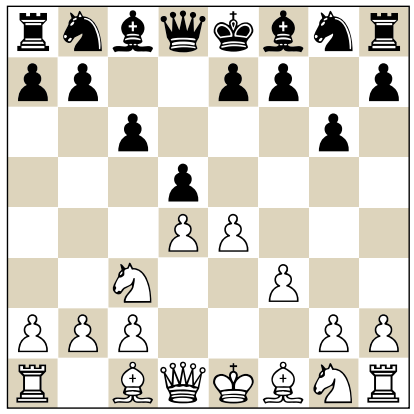
Bezgodov gives a game Pogonina-Gunina via the move order 3...e6 4.♘c3 ♘d7 5.a3 ♕b6, but in general this concept isn't really dealt with. It's not a major complaint of course, but I do like the idea of Botvinnik being right more than 50 years on!

Another chapter that caught my eye was the section on 3...g6.

1.e4 c6 2.d4 d5 3.f3 g6

This transposes back into a line of the Modern that I have played with Black. I do wonder whether Bezgodov fully realised this as he missed a couple of games which I thought were very important.

4.♘c3



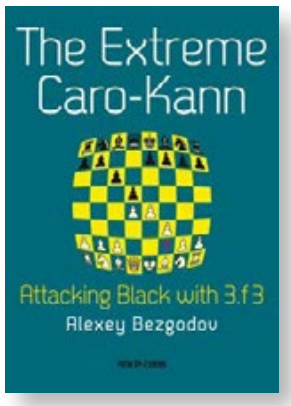
4...♗g7

4...♕b6 is a weird thought that occurred to me. I have played a similar pawn sacrifice in the Modern (1.e4 g6 2.d4 ♗g7 3.♘c3 c6 4.f4 ♕b6 5.♘f3 d5) so this is also not 100% silly.

5.♗e3 ♕b6 6.♖b1

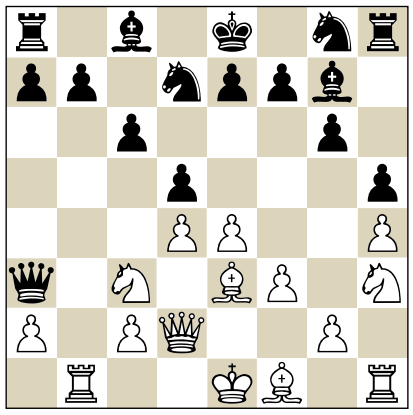
After 6.♕d2 ♕xb2 7.♖b1 ♕a3 8.h4 h5 Bezgodov makes a good case for 9.♘h3 in the book, but he doesn't seem to have seen the game Jones-Krasenkow (again via the Modern transposition), which I thought was very important for the whole idea:

The Extreme Caro-Kann
Attacking Black with 3.f3
by Alexey Bezgodov
New In Chess, 2014



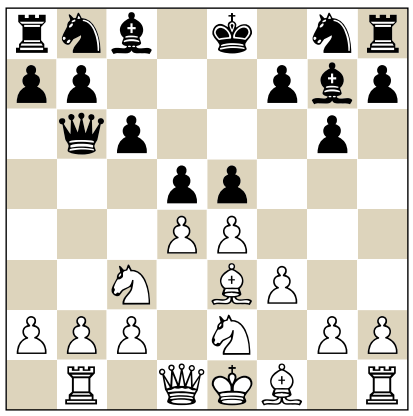
Sadler on Books

9.♘h3 ♘d7 (Michal Krasenkow's move; 9...e6 10.♘f4 b6 11.g4 is the line that Bezgodov focuses on from Kulaots-Levin, Gausdal 2006),



when 10.exd5 ♘b6 11.dxc6 bxc6 was comfortable for Black in Jones-Krasenkow, Gausdal 2007.

6...e5 7.♘ge2



7...♘f6

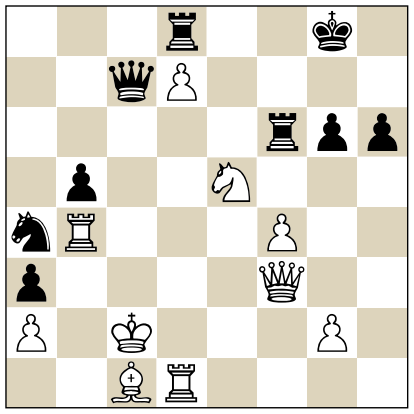
Bezgodov comments that 'it's strange, but not once has the natural and good move 7...♘f6 been tried'. But it has... by me! Bezgodov thinks that 6.♖b1 is a better move than 6.♕d2 but I really have my doubts. The fact that White loses the right to castle queenside really puts a brake on the speed of White's play. Pawn sacrifices from Black aimed at opening the e-file gain enormously in potency as it will now take White a lot longer to get his king to safety.

8.♕d2 exd4 9.♗xd4 ♕d8 10.exd5 0-0 11.♘f4 cxd5 12.♘fxd5 ♘c6 13.♗xf6 ♗xf6 14.♘xf6+ ♕xf6 15.♘e4 ♕e5 16.♕d6 ♕a5+ 17.♔f2 ♗f5

And Black had pretty good compensation for the pawn in Arribas-Sadler, Barcelona 2011.

So a few minor complaints but an excellent book overall.

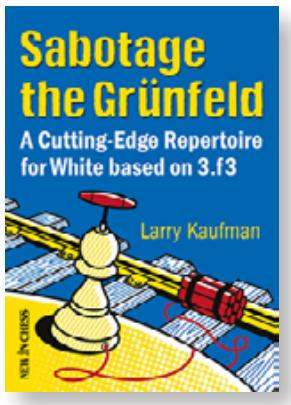
Horror, absolute horror and mourning for the fall of Western civilization was my first reaction when I opened Larry Kaufman's ***Sabotage the Grünfeld***. Numbers, numbers everywhere. This is the first serious book I have ever read where the author has heavily annotated variations with computer evaluations (such as +0.35). They are literally everywhere. I have tried very hard to get the better of my initial shock reaction but without real success. Of course authors make heavy use of computers in writing their books (I do it as well when writing this column) so in some ways it may seem churlish to complain when an author is honest and open about it. I fear this might be an age thing (though the author is in his 60s!) but I just don't get any feeling at all for a position when I see +0.35 next to it. Firstly, it is lovely the computer thinks it would be better, but to be honest it could play pretty much any move and still make it work. +0.35 can mean anything from 'play 20 perfect only moves to reach a slightly better endgame' to 'better structure with few counter-chances for Black' but my chances of making anything of the first scenario are pretty slim. It reminds me a little of Anand's decision to take a draw against Andreikin in the 12th round of the recent Candidates' tournament (for Anand's own explanation see New In Chess 2014/3, p.26).



Watching the game without engine support, I was completely convinced that Anand had missed his chances and that he had to take a draw. Houdini claims a trivial sounding advantage of +3.22 after 41.♖c4 but it's a complicated win... maybe easy for a computer but not necessarily practical for a human. Secondly, the computer evaluation of a position depends enormously on both how long you let it analyse, and also on the amount of human input during analysis. The author explains that the evaluations are generated after allowing Komodo and Houdini (3 and 4) to analyse a position for at least 15 minutes. My (limited) experience of running analysis programs on reasonably fast hardware on normal positions is that 95% of the analysis is rather strange. Weird rook moves, tempi lost that somehow don't seem to matter... It's often hard to understand the point of most of it, and you have little hope of remembering it. I really believe that computer analysis still improves dramatically with human input (at the very least in terms of practical usability). So I really don't like the idea of following pure computer variations just ending in a number. Younger players may disagree though!

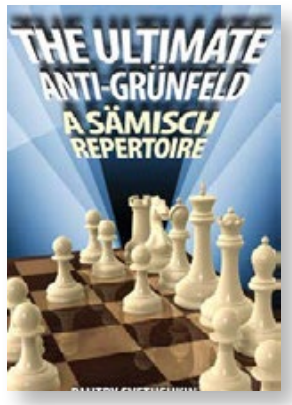
Putting aside these rantings, it has to be said that the author has put in a very conscientious job. I wasn't very keen on the first 30-page chapter filled with historical 3. f3 games – a few games are fun but 24 was overdoing it a little for my liking – but the other chapters are filled to the brim

Sabotage the Grünfeld
A Cutting-Edge Repertoire for White based on 3.f3
by Larry Kaufman
New In Chess, 2014



with recent games and (computer) analysis.

I especially valued reading it as a sort of background check for Dmitry Svetushkin's excellent ***The Ultimate Anti-Grünfeld, A Sämisch Repertoire***, which also deals with all Black's alternatives after 1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 g6 3.f3. Kaufman mentions Svetushkin a lot in his book (and possibly improves on some of his analysis in places) and I can understand why. The 3.f3 system is pretty complex with many transpositional possibilities (the Benko and the King's Indian, to name just two) so I really appreciated the way Svetushkin structures the material. The book consists of 8 parts – 2 parts on the Grünfeld lines with 3...d5, 1 part on Benko transpositions and the rest on King's Indian transpositions. Each part consists of a chapter detailing the 'Main Ideas', a 'Step by Step' chapter which walks you through the theory and a 'Complete Games' chapter which puts the ideas and the theory into a practical context. It doesn't make the opening simple to learn, but this book definitely makes it possible!



The Ultimate Anti-Grünfeld
A Sämisch Repertoire
by Dmitry Svetushkin
Chess Stars, 2013

If you have to choose a book to learn this opening then I would definitely go for Svetushkin's. Kaufman's book is maybe worth getting as a sort of bonus material once you've got a grip on the opening.

Just as a last comment. Systems with ...f6 for Black are much less common than systems with f3, but the original English player Mike Surtees has developed a number of openings using this move.

Take a look at this:

Andrew Bird
Michael Surtees
Buxton 2013

1.♘f3
1.g3 e5 2.c4 c6 3.d4 f6 4.♗g2 ♗b4+ 5.♗d2 ♕e7 6.c5 ♘a6 7.♗xb4 ♘xb4 8.♘c3 ♘h6 9.♘f3 b6 10.dxe5 fxe5 11.♘e4 bxc5 12.♘d6+ ♔d8 13.0-0 ♔c7 14.a3 ♘d5 15.♘xc8 ♖hxc8 had worked out pretty well in Davies-Surtees, Leeds 2011.
1...c6 2.c4 f6 3.d4 e5 4.e4 ♗b4+ 5.♗d2 ♕e7 6.a3 ♗xd2+ 7.♕xd2 d6 8.♘c3 ♘h6 9.h3 ♘d7 10.♗e2 exd4 11.♕xd4 a5 12.0-0 0-0 13.♖fe1 a4 14.♗d1 ♘c5
With a good position for Black!

Waiting for the first book on that! ■

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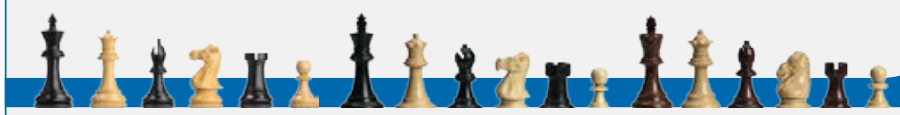

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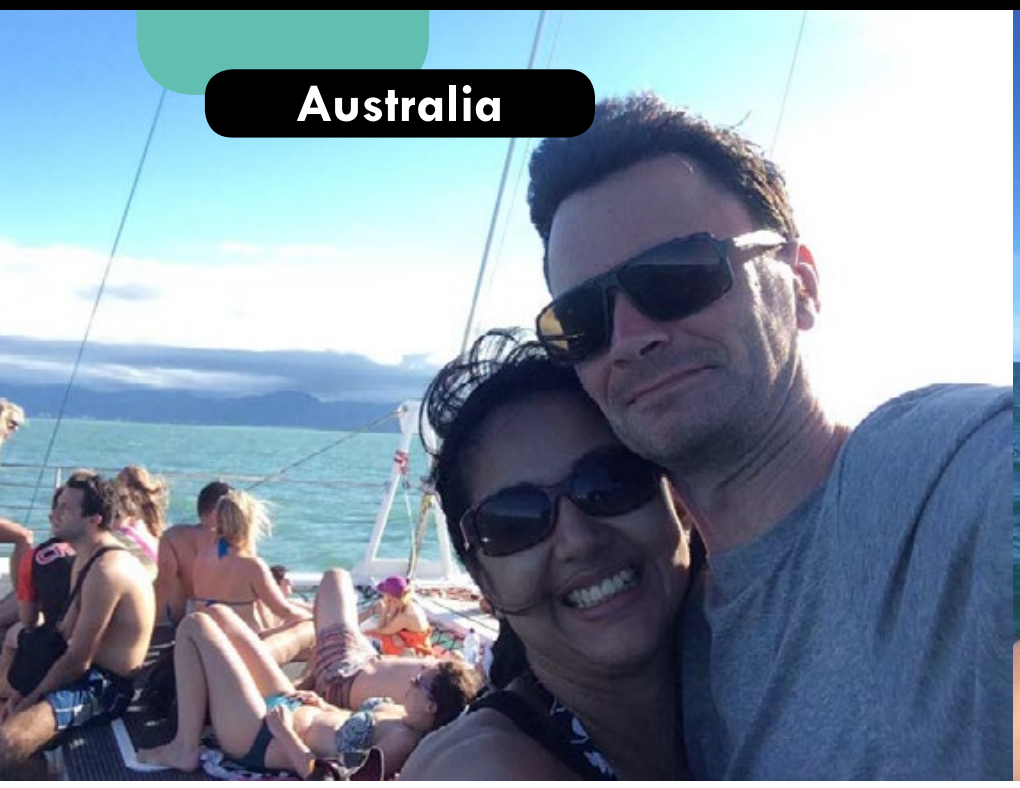
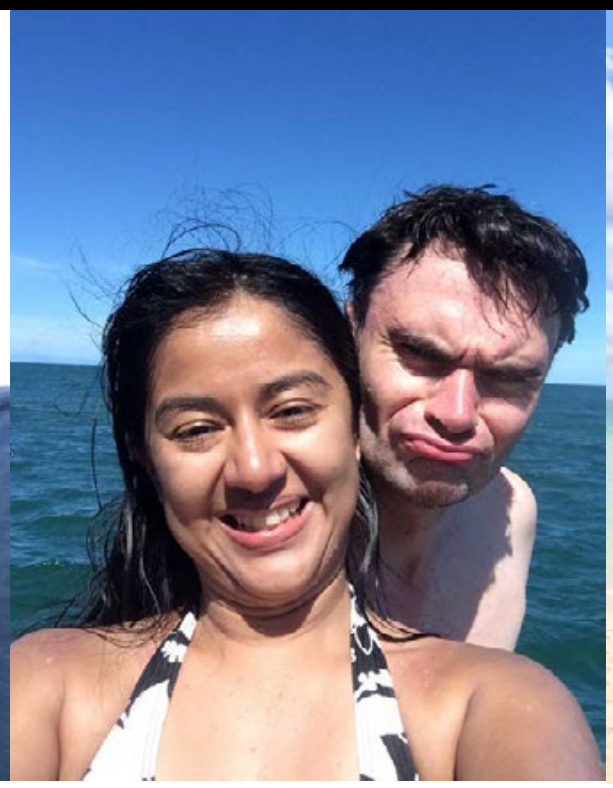




For years **Loek van Wely** was happily touring the American circuit and happily reported on his adventures in our pages. Everything was hunky-dory till that fateful day in 2012, when a moment of ill-timed honesty at the American border cost him dearly. One day the enterprising Dutch grandmaster hopes to return to the Home of the Brave, but for the moment he has set his sights on another side of the globe. It didn't take him long to warm to the natural beauty of Australia and the laid-back attitude of its inhabitants. But next time he hopes to be less laid-back on the chessboard.

It all started on the 9th of July 2012 at Newark Airport. Leaving the airplane I walked to customs, thinking it would be business as usual. You show your passport and you enter the country. Not really. Unfortunately, a few hours later I was handcuffed and locked up and eventually I was deported. Which was not according to your reporter's plan. ¿Qué pasó?

Had the NSA read articles in New In Chess in which I used improper language? (In fact, I often do, but I have been badly censored, and not just once!) Did I attack one colleague too many? (Indeed, there are more than one, I still need to watch my back!) Or had they found a hole in my analysis and did they suspect me of leaving it there on purpose? (As happened a lot in the good old days when computers weren't that strong and lots of people were still very naive!)

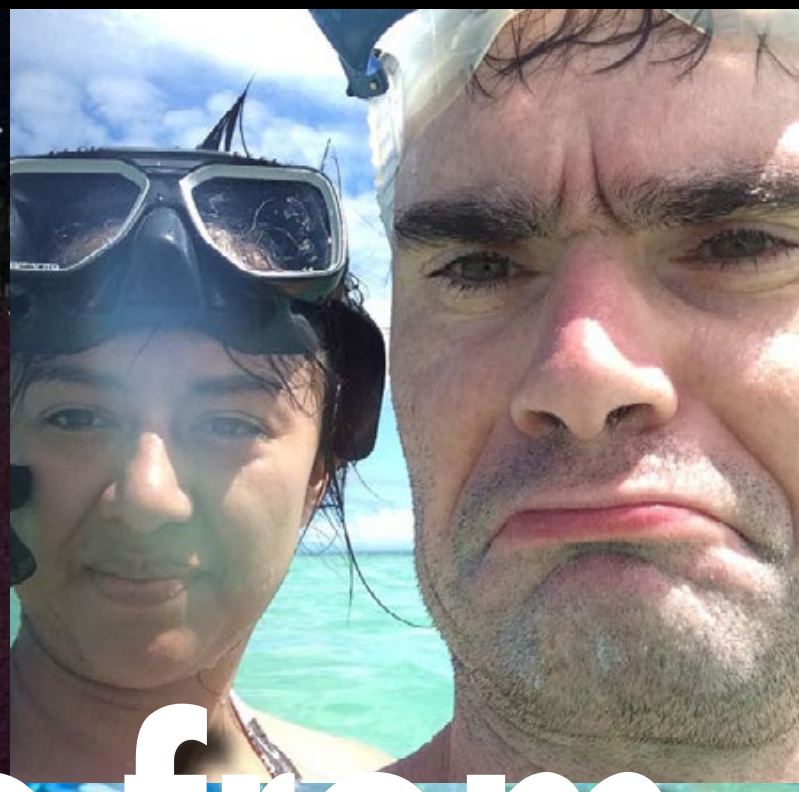
Nope, the thing is that your reporter was either honest or stupid. I tend to prefer the first version. When I was asked about my plans in the U.S., I happily told the immigration officer that for a few days I was going to teach some kids at a chess training camp. This was something I should not have told them! Although in my eyes I had come to do some charity work and the money was peanuts, they considered me as some sort of economic refugee, which meant I needed a working visa.

Technically speaking, I have always been walking on a tightrope. I mean, a professional chess player is going to a chess tournament. So what? 'Luckily', most customs officers see chess as something like gambling. But then again, you might get unlucky...

Instead of getting the expected hero's welcome, I now have become persona non grata. No mercy for KingLoek! From now on I need to apply for a visa, and from my experience in the meantime, things don't look so promising. I have already met one person at the consulate in Amsterdam who thought he had to be the first line of defence...

It's a pity. I will miss NBA basketball (go Pacers!) and Las Vegas,

Greetings from Down Under!



In Australia Loek van Wely and his wife Lorena discovered the splendour of the Great Barrier Reef, the hospitality of the chess community and the irresistible lure of the selfie.

both for poker and Maurice Ashley's Millionaire Chess, but it is time to move on.

And so, in 2013, I decided to try my luck in Australia. And Lady Luck smiled back at me. Although I had been warned that the Aussies are tricky and underrated, and that the jet lags tend to make you suffer severely (and all this is very true!), I was thinking, Why would that apply to me? After all I am Superman (your reporter never had any issues with his self-esteem). And indeed, I did manage to escape from Australia with more rating points and more money than when I arrived. Unfortunately, I also had a big mouth. Having only finished 2nd in the Doeberl Cup in Canberra (but finished first in Sydney), I claimed that I still had some unfinished business...

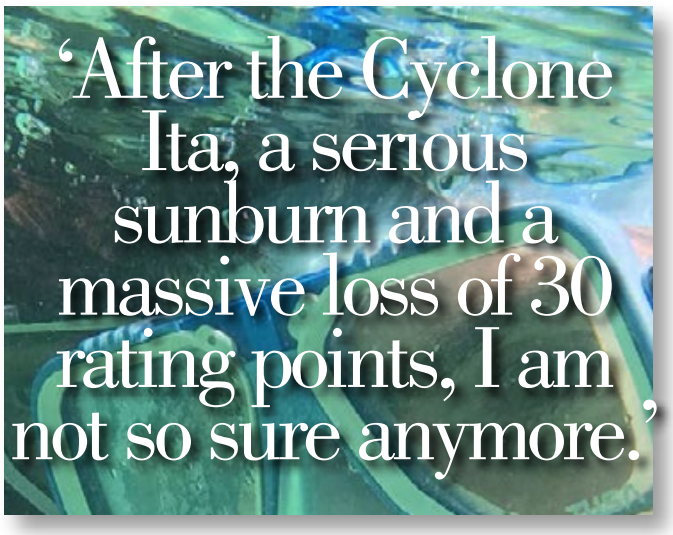
This year I decided to push my luck and returned with my wife! The good thing of this arrangement is that you always have someone to blame ☺. And I was trying to be smart. By having a holiday at the Great Barrier Reef prior to the Doeberl Cup, I hoped to avoid the effects of the jet lag. I am not sure if taking a holiday is a good idea before a competition, but yes, you are right, life could be worse. Although now, in hindsight, after the Cyclone Ita, a serious sunburn and a massive loss of 30 rating points, I am not so sure anymore...

Anyway, I was very happy to be back. Australians are pretty laidback, with the exception of that police officer who stopped me for speeding (113 km/h where 100 was allowed) and asked: 'Why were you in such a rush?' My thoughts went like Crocodile ('You call THAT a knife?') Dundee, You call that a rush?, as I remember the good old days when 170 km/h was my cruising speed on the Deutsche Autobahn. But since I didn't fancy another episode of being locked up abroad, I wisely kept my mouth shut and just paid the 180$ fine.

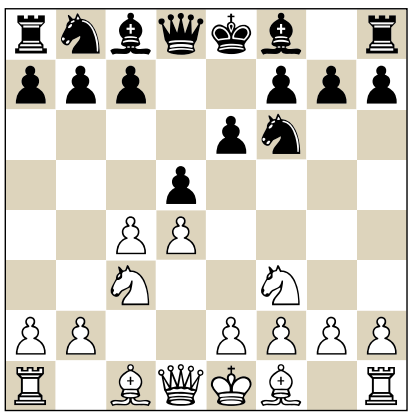
If you combine playing two tournaments with a holiday, it only makes sense if you play well and manage to break even. In Canberra a first moment of truth came in Round 5.

SL 6.2 – E04
Liviu-Dieter Nisipeanu
Loek van Wely
Canberra Doeberl Cup 2014 (5)

After struggling in the first four games, from which I somehow managed to squeeze four points, I just needed to survive this crucial game and I would

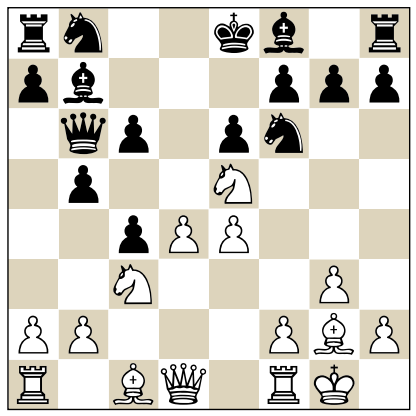


be out of the woods. Unfortunately, this was the beginning of my downfall. Well, in all honesty my downfall had already begun, but it was only in this game that it took on a definite shape.
1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 e6 3.♘f3 d5 4.♘c3

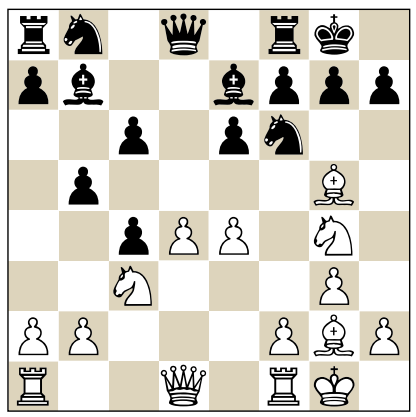


4...c6! Tricky play in the opening. Dieter probably expected 4...dxc4, which I also play from time to time. Instead, I am trying to get him into some kind of Meran, which he doesn't like that much.

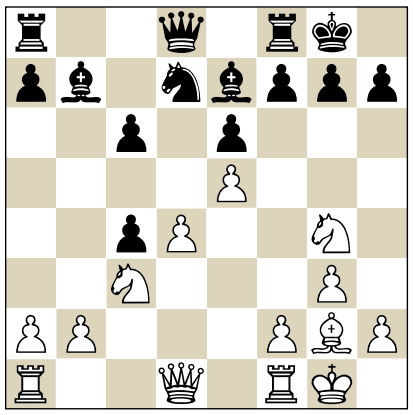
5.g3 dxc4 6.♗g2 b5 7.♘e5
Once you say A, you also got to say B: I had the feeling that I had surprised him in the opening, so better continue sharply then.
7...♕b6 The solid and less risky choice was 7...a6 8.a4 ♗b7 9.0-0 ♗e7 10.axb5 axb5 11.♖xa8 ♗xa8 12.♘xb5 cxb5 13.♗xa8, but that was not in the spirit of the game plan.
8.0-0 ♗b7 9.e4



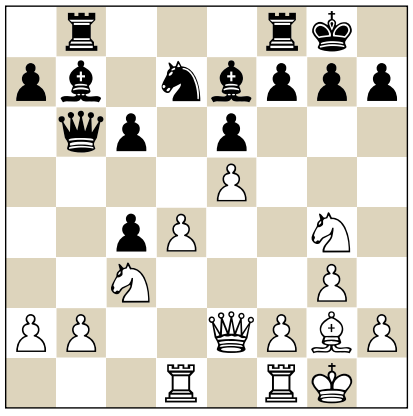
9...♗e7?! More to the point would have been the challenging 9...♘bd7 10.♗e3 ♖d8.
10.♗g5 0-0 11.♘g4 ♕d8



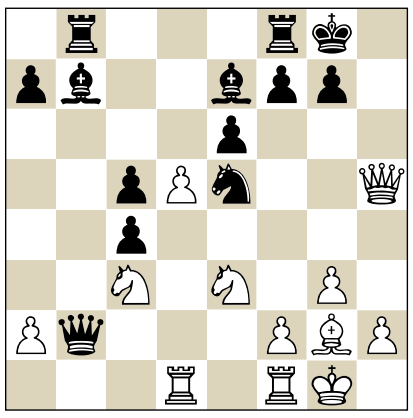
12.♗xf6 I had been expecting 12.♘xf6+ ♗xf6 13.♗xf6 ♕xf6 14.e5 ♕e7 15.♘e4 c5! 16.dxc5 ♘d7 17.♘f6+! (17.♕d6?! ♕xd6 18.exd6 ♖ac8, and White's centre will collapse) 17...gxf6 18.♗xb7 ♘xe5 19.♗xa8 ♖xa8 20.b4, and it's not really clear what's going on here.
12...♗xf6?! Ein Fingerfehler! 12...gxf6 had to be played, although White has nice compensation after 13.♘e2.
13.e5 ♗e7 14.♘xb5 ♘d7 15.♘c3
Now Black is already in a critical situation, which I didn't realize during the game.



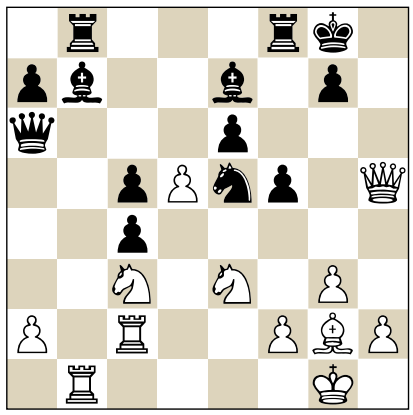
15...♖b8? Standard but bad. In fact, this allows White's ideal set-up. However, with 15...♘b6! I could have shown some understanding ☺. The idea is to keep White's queen tied to d4. Apart from that, at some point Black wants to play the freeing ...c5, but he needs to be ready for d5 then: 16.♘e4 ♗a6, and somehow things would not be so simple for White now.
16.♕e2 ♕b6 17.♖ad1 I finally realized what had happened, and just to avoid being completely lost positionally, I had to take some tactical risks.



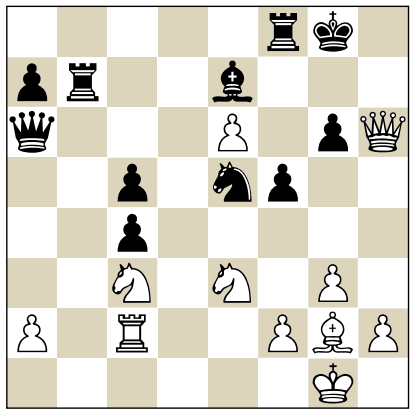
17...c5!? Good or bad, probably bad, but this has to be played, even in hindsight. **18.d5 h5** The point.
19.♘e3 ♘xe5 20.♕xh5 ♕xb2 Eyes closed and let's hope this will work.



21.♖c1 Not the best and not what I had feared most. I was afraid that 21.♕xe5! would lead to a lost position: 21...♗f6 22.♕c7 ♕xc3 23.dxe6 ♗xg2 24.exf7+ ♖xf7 25.♕xb8+ ♖f8 26.♕d6 ♗xf1 27.♔xf1 ♗d4. This was the sort of move I had pinned my hopes on, but after 28.♕d5+ ♔h7 29.♕h5+ ♔g8 30.♘f5! White takes over.
21...f5 Desperately trying to fight for the initiative.
22.♖c2 ♕b6 23.♖b1 ♕a6



24.♖xb7? Expected, very tempting, but not the best. Better, and much more annoying, would have been 24.♖cb2!, but luckily I was in serious time-trouble and Dieter played this very fast in order to put some extra pressure on me.
24...♖xb7 25.dxe6 g6 26.♕h6



26...♖d8? And finally his gamble pays off and I stumble. 26...♗f6!, with the same idea as in the game, would have worked: 27.♗d5 27...♖e7, and now there is nothing better than to repeat moves with 28.f4 ♗g7 29.♕g5 ♗f6. **27.♖e2 ♖d3 28.♘xf5! gxf5 29.♖xe5 ♗f8 30.♗xb7 ♕xb7 31.♕g6+ ♕g7 32.♕xg7+ ♔xg7 33.e7** Black resigned.

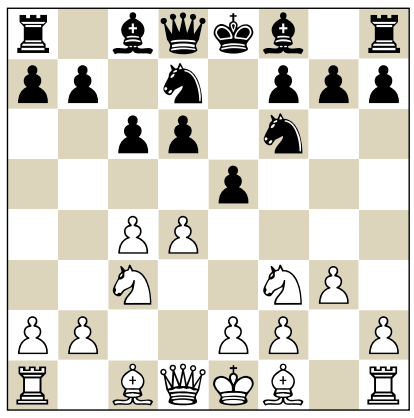
After this game Dieter went cruising and took first place pretty convincingly. In the last round he had White against a 2300 player that I knew only too well. Against the same Junta Ikeda I had been suffering big-time on two earlier occasions. And indeed, he put up a tough fight, but so did Dieter, and in the end his 300 extra Elo points counted for something.

I had a chance to get back into the tournament after losing to Dieter, but then I ran into Luke Li, a kid from New Zealand who didn't break in a bad position and managed to get on my nerves (a combination of making good moves and irritating behaviour), but more about that later. From then on, it was all going in the wrong direction.

Although I was playing really badly, in fact I was merely playing against myself. If you are hyper-critical of your own play and only expect 2700+ moves from your opponents, yes, then life can be tough. Still, there was a chance to redeem myself somewhat. There was a fighting fund of 1000$, and I was the only eligible player left. All I had to do was to win my last-round game. At least that would have eased the pain a bit.

OI 5.3 – A54
Loek van Wely
Endre Ambrus
Canberra Doeberl Cup 2014 (9)

This game is the perfect example of what happens when things are going from bad to worse!
1.♘f3 ♘f6 2.d4 d6 3.g3 ♘bd7 4.c4 e5 5.♘c3 c6



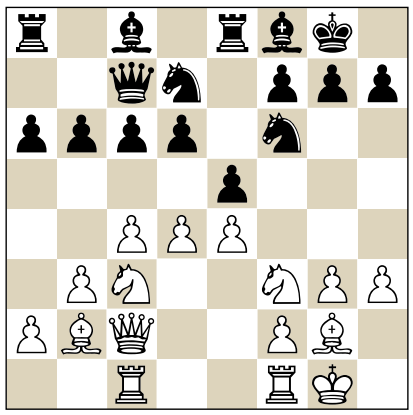
Moment 1 in the game: here I spent at least 10 minutes thinking about the consequences of a quick ...e4, followed by ...d5. Wasting time, which could have cost me dearly. Apart from that, there is no point thinking at such a level, which doesn't even get close to your opponent's imagination!

6.♗g2 ♕c7

Played instantly. Sigh.

7.0-0 a6 From here on I started worrying about (and calculating) a possible ...b5.

8.b3 ♗e7 9.♕c2 0-0 10.♗b2 ♖e8 11.♖ac1 ♗f8 12.h3 b6 13.e4



Now I am just waiting for my opponent to take on d4, and it's game over.

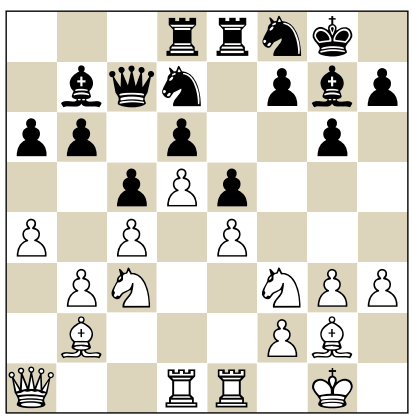
13...♗b7 14.a4 g6 15.♖fe1 ♗g7 16.♖cd1 ♖ad8 17.♕b1 ♘f8

Hmm, he doesn't take on d4. Now what? Another sign of bad form was that around here I started to wonder if I was getting outplayed by this dude! My confidence level was definitely very high!

18.♕a1 ♘6d7 19.d5

I didn't see any more useful moves!

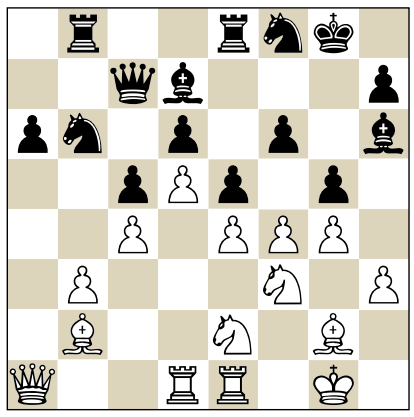
19...c5



20.a5!

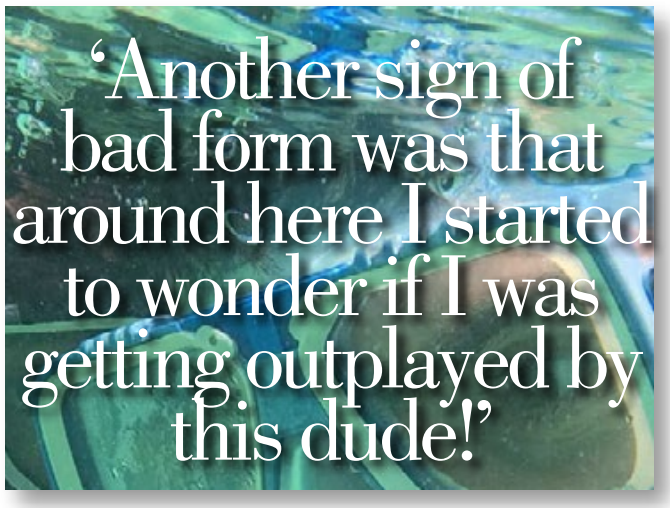
Opening a second front, just in case.

20...♗c8 21.♘d2 ♗h6 22.axb6 ♘xb6 23.♘e2 ♗d7 24.f4 f6 25.♘f3 ♖b8 26.g4 g5



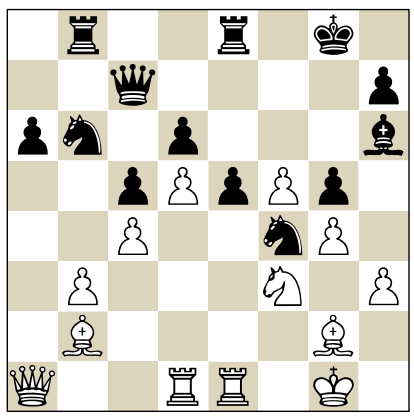
27.fxe5?

The question mark is not because the move in itself is so bad, but because I simply lost my patience.



After 27.f5! Black is badly misplaced and White will win, slowly but surely. The game continuation looks good, but gives Black some chances as well.

27...fxe5 28.♘g3 ♘g6 29.♘f5 ♗xf5 30.exf5 ♘f4



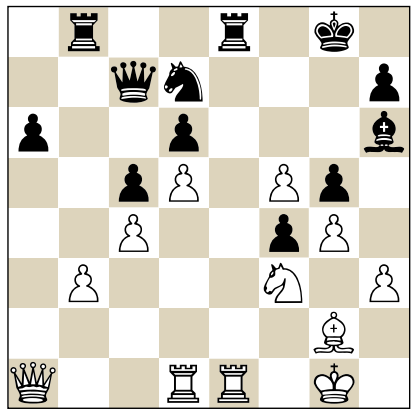
31.♗c1?

The standard choice was 31.♘d2, and after the standard response 31...♗g7 32.♘e4 h6 33.♕xa6 White wins. However, when I discovered 31...♘d7 32.♘e4 ♖xb3 33.♗c3, I wasn't so sure anymore. Thus I got this brilliant idea, unfortunately overlooking a little detail.

31...♘d7

I had forgotten about 31...e4!, of course, which would have been a great chance for Black to change the nature of the game: 32.♘d2 e3 33.♘e4 e2 34.♘f6+ ♔f7 35.♖d2 ♗g7 36.♘xe8 ♖xe8, and it's anybody's game!

32.♗xf4 exf4



33.♖e6! Back on track.

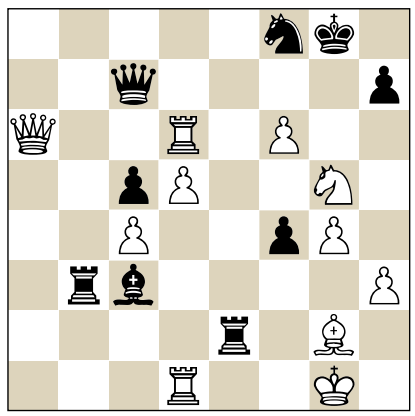
33...♗g7 34.♕xa6 ♘f8 35.♖xd6

I didn't want to give Black any sort of counterplay, of course, but it can't be bad to take this pawn, can it?

35...♗c3 36.f6 ♖xb3 37.♘xg5

OK, I wasn't so sure about this pawn. After all, now Black's queen might end up on g3 at some stage.

37...♖e2

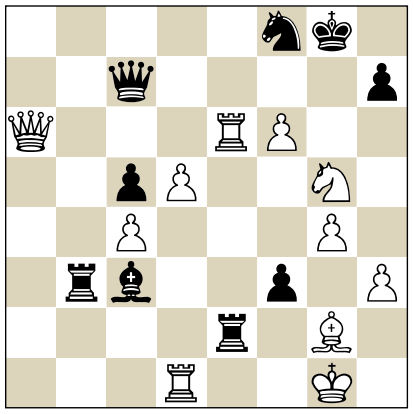


38.♖e6??

Instead, 38.♕c6! ♕b8 (38...♖bb2 39.♗f1! – 39.♗f3?? ♗d4+) 39.♖d7! wasn't too difficult to find.

38...f3!

The sum total of all my fears!



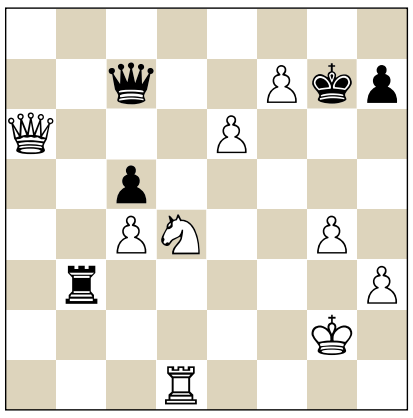
39.f7+?

Why not make another bad move? But 39.♘xf3 ♘xe6 40.dxe6 ♗xf6 is not so funny either.

39...♔g7 40.♘xf3 ♘xe6 41.dxe6 ♗d4+ 42.♘xd4

42.♖xd4 ♖b1+ and 42.♔h1 ♖xf3 are even easier for Black.

42...♖xg2+ 43.♔xg2

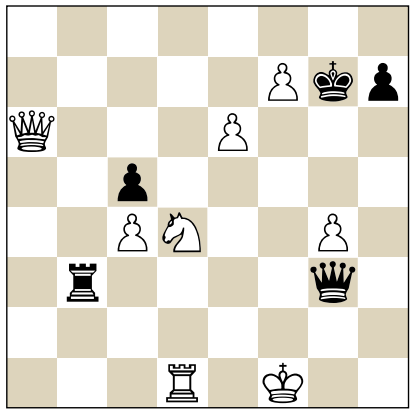


43...♕g3+?

Although this is winning, I got some small hopes here.

43...♖g3+ looked stronger to me during the game, and indeed the computer gives mate in 7.

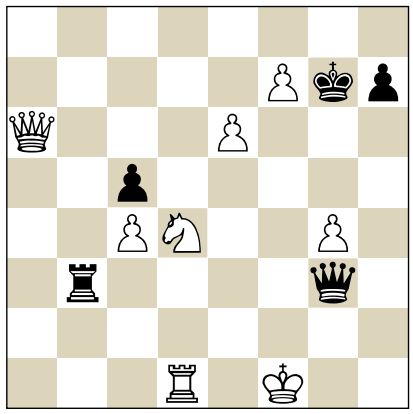
44.♔f1 ♕xh3+ 45.♔e1 ♕g3+ 46.♔f1



46...♕h3+

46...♕f4+ 47.♔e1 cxd4, and after this quiet move White is defenceless. He has a few checks, but that's about it: 48.f8♕+ ♔xf8 49.♕a8+ ♔e7 50.♕a7+ ♔xe6 51.♕a6+ ♔f7 52.♕a7+ ♔g6, and White can resign.

47.♔e1 ♕g3+ 48.♔f1



And I looked at him, and he looked at me, and I quickly grabbed his hand!

That was very bitter. But I must say I had a lovely time in Canberra, and Charles Bishop, the driving force behind this festival, was a great host (and sucked me in for the next edition, when I guess I will be more humble).

RAELENE ZELESCO

Guest of honour Garry Kasparov presented Liviu-Dieter Nisipeanu with the Doeberl Cup.

Then the circus moved to Sydney. Same faces, different city. In the second round I met this guy Luke Li again. After Canberra (and having dropped 22 rating points) I was a bit on edge, I have to admit. And he really managed to get on my nerves again. Although I don't think he did it intentionally, it certainly had its effect.

I remember the good old days when Joel Lautier had the habit of sighing heavily when something went terribly wrong. And usually a few moves later he would resign. At one of the Amber tournaments in Monaco, during a blindfold session, Jeroen Piket suddenly heard Joel sigh. He looked at me and I nodded back. Yes, he had just blundered a piece ☺.

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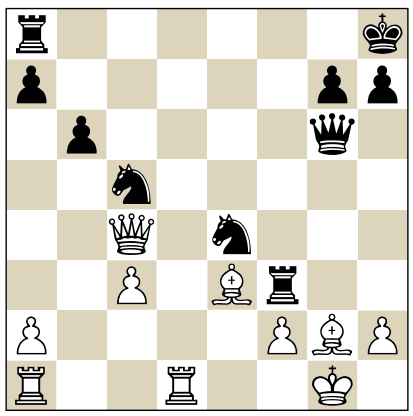
However, Luke Li is different. He was sighing heavily, but his position was maybe not that great, but not that bad either. In fact, it really started to piss me off when his sighing got louder and louder after I had screwed up! To make things even worse, he defended very well. In the end it was a draw, leaving me on a serious tilt!

A few rounds later, I got ripped apart by a Chinese girl, and that was about it for me. The tournament was won by Moulthun Ly, which was quite a surprise. But he played pretty well and met all the big guys. His play isn't very spectacular, but he managed to avoid serious mistakes, which is not such a bad idea in an event in which fatigue is a major issue (after all we were playing 18 games in 11 days, not counting the travel time and the jetlag!).

Quite typical for him, I think, was his game against Nisipeanu, in which he took a draw in a far better position. In this tournament it worked out well, because he ended up winning, but in principle, you should push your luck whenever you get the chance.



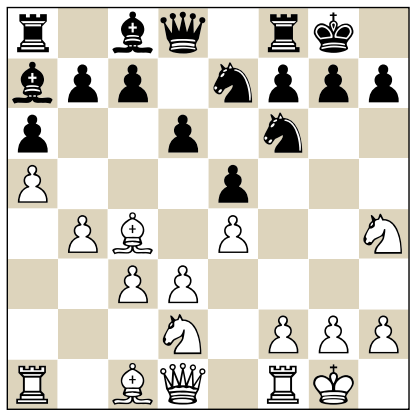
Nisipeanu-Moulthun Ly
Sydney Open 2014 (4)

Dieter wasn't so sharp anymore either at the end of his Australia adventure. Normally he is having this kind of guys for breakfast, especially when playing as White. However, first of all he chose a very innocent line, and if his opponent had followed the known theory, the game would have been very drawish. But Moulthun Ly deviated and Dieter even ended up in a worse position. Probably realizing that things weren't going his way, combined with fatigue, he offered a draw. And although I don't think Dieter is the kind of guy who offers draws in lost positions, nevertheless alarm bells should have been ringing in casa di Moulthun Ly!
22.♖d4 And Black accepted. Draw.

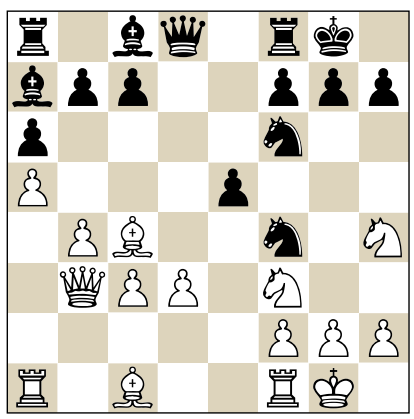
Chess-wise, the highlight in Sydney was the following miniature.

IG 2.7 – C54
Levente Vajda
Zuhao Luke Li
Sydney Open 2014 (8)

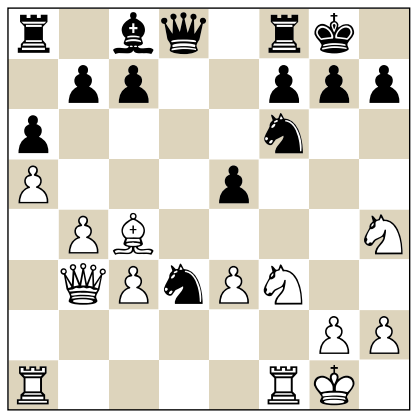
1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.♗c4 ♗c5 4.c3 ♘f6 5.d3 0-0 6.♘bd2 d6 7.b4 ♗b6 8.a4 a6 9.0-0 ♘e7 10.a5 ♗a7 11.♘h4?!



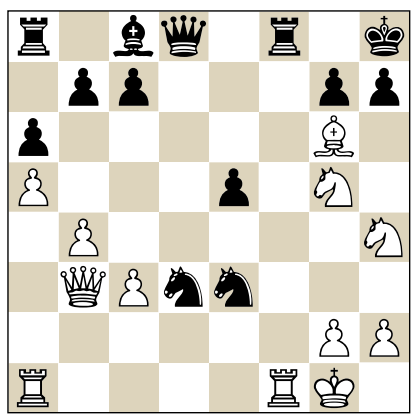
A suspect move, but this knight will decide the game in a few moves!
11...d5 12.exd5 ♘exd5 13.♕b3 ♘f4 14.♘df3



14...♘xd3 Since I was playing on the next board and as usual was investing more time in anybody else's game than my own, I thought that 14...♘e2+ 15.♔h1 ♘xc1 16.♖axc1 ♘g4 was very strong, with the idea of ...g5 and ...♘h6. However, things are not that simple here either: 17.♕a2 g5 18.h3 ♘xf2+ (18...♘h6 19.♕d2) 19.♖xf2 ♗xf2 20.♕xf2 gxh4 21.♘xe5.
15.♗e3 ♗xe3 Dangerous but good.
16.fxe3



16...♘g4 He could have played 16...e4!. The main idea is that you free the e5-square for your knight.
17.♗xf7+ Now things are getting fishy.**17...♔h8 18.♗g6! ♘xe3 19.♘g5!?**



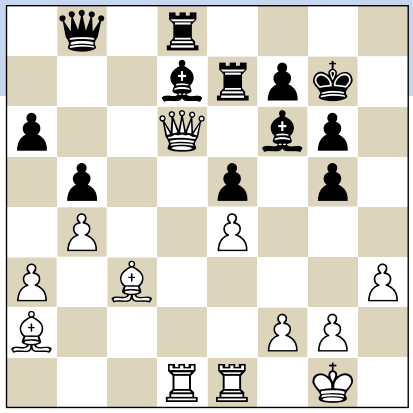
19...♘xf1??
A double question mark for Luke being so naive. Did he really think life is so simple? If he had tried harder to find out what was White's intention, he would have found Black's only defence by elimination: 19...♗f5! 20.♘f7+ ♖xf7 21.♕xf7 ♗xg6 22.♕f3 ♘xf1 23.♘xg6+ hxg6 24.♕h3+ ♔g8 25.♕e6+, with a draw.
20.♕g8+!! Very sweet! 20...♔xg8 21.♗xh7+ ♔h8 22.♘g6+ is mate; 20...♖xg8 21.♘f7 mate. Black resigned.

Since I finished on a serious minus score, I was condemned to try my luck at the poker tables in Melbourne instead. Right now I am at +100$, still a long way to go... ■

Yochanan Afek

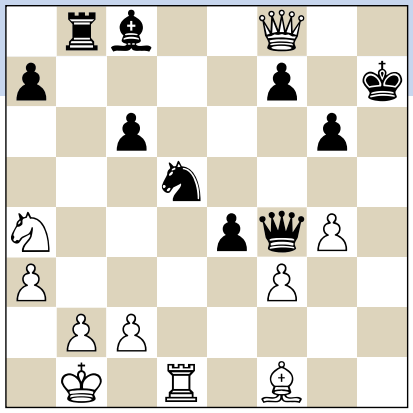
Beware: Brilliancy!

Solutions of page 37



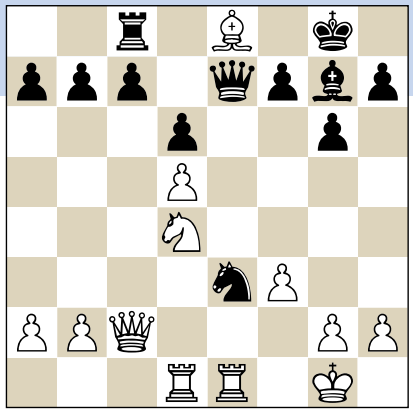
Fischer-Spassky
Havana Olympiad 1966

White could win a more significant pawn by **36.♗xe5! ♖xe5 37.♕xb8 ♖xb8 38.♖xd7**, maintaining a clear edge while minimizing Black's counterplay.



Kapnisis-Pavlidis
Chania 2011

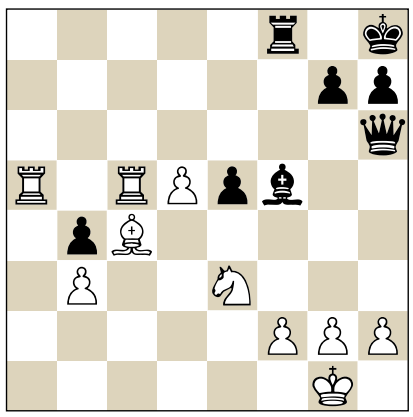
The same idea could be implemented much more efficiently: **24.♗d3! ♗xg4 25.♖h1+ ♗h5 26.♖xh5+! gxh5 27.♗xe4+ ♕xe4** (27...f5 28.♗xf5+) **28.♕xf7+** Game over.



Pelletier-Vachier-Lagrave
Biel 2011

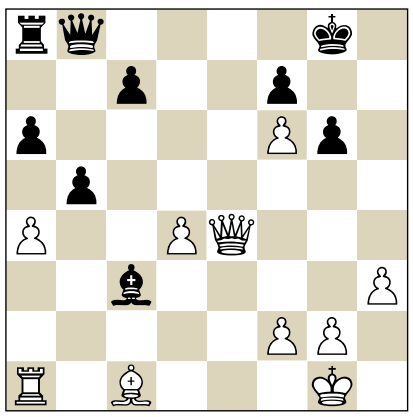
The stunning **18...♗e5!!** would have resulted in comfortable equality, e.g. **19.♗xf7+ ♔xf7 20.♕f2 ♘xd1 21.♖xd1 ♔g8**

Readers are invited to send in brilliant missed opportunities by titled players to: afekchess@gmail.com



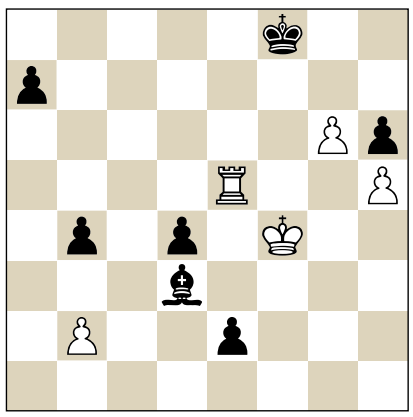
Plaskett-Soffer
Tel Aviv 2012

Missing the 'invisible' **28...♗b1!!**, after which the f2-square is defenceless, e.g. **29.♖a1 ♕f4! 30.♖xb1 ♕xf2+ 31.♔h1 ♕xe3** and the new black passed pawn might well turn the tables.



Haba-Sodoma
Czech team championship 2011

After the aggressive **31.♗h6!!** Black would be lost, as can be seen from: **31...♗xa1 32.♕h4!**, or **31...♕d8 32.♗g7 g5 33.♕f3!**, or **31...♕e8 32.♕h4 ♕e2 33.g4**



Nakamura-Ibragimov
San Diego 2004

Black missed that after **48...♗b5! 49.♔f5 d3 50.♔f6** he has the multi-purpose move **50...♗a4!!** (but not 50...d2? 51.g7+ ♔g8 52.♖xb5) **51.♖e7 e1♕! 52.♖xe1 d2**, winning easily.

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Jan Timman

A venerable tradition

The 23rd Sigeman tournament was another 'half-tournament' of only five rounds. A short race that leaves no room for mistakes, as Jan Timman found out.

As in previous years, the opening ceremony took place in the dignified council chamber of the old city hall. In his speech, the Lord Mayor of Malmö explained that the city's council meetings had been held in this chamber for centuries. He pointed out the large paintings on the wall. In the middle were the portraits of the oldest kings, while the more recent members of the Swedish royal house were hanging closer to the speaker's platform – all venerable tradition, like the tournament itself. Ulf Andersson was there, too, but he could not stay in Malmö long. The next morning at 5 a.m. he had to take a train to Stockholm, as he was expected to sit down at an official lunch in the early afternoon. In such a case you're better off taking place behind a chessboard, I thought.

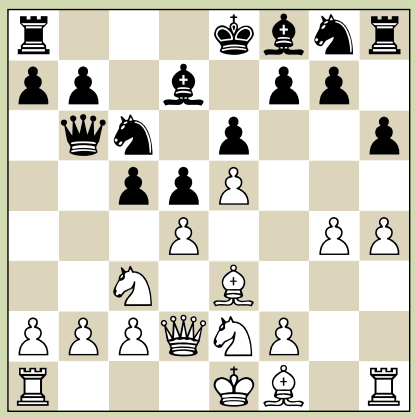
'Interesting, such a half-tournament,' Ulf observed. And it's true that the tournament has often had only five rounds in the last few years, with three foreign GMs and three Swedish players. As always, the Hall of Mirrors of the Hipp Theatre was the playing venue. I had already played 70 games there. After that you cannot but feel at home. I was also lucky in that I had an extra game as White. But in the first round something went wrong against the local player Axel Smith, which dispirited me somewhat. I recalled that six years ago, when I had played here for the last time, I had started with 1½ out of 5. With a final rush of 3½ out of 4, I managed to improve that score, but that would be impossible this time. Fortunately, I won the second game, probably the most interesting game of the entire tournament.

CK 4.14 – B12
Nils Grandelius
Jan Timman
Malmö 2014 (2)

1.e4 c6 2.d4 d5 3.e5 ♗f5 4.h4
This is a popular advance these days and it didn't surprise me. Grandelius also played this against me in Wijk aan Zee last year, and although he lost that game, he did score some successes with the white system later.

4...h6
An old Botvinnik move from his revenge match against Tal. Black is prepared to withdraw his bishop to d7 after the advance of the white g-pawn. This results in a French-type position, in which Black will try to show that White's pawn moves on the kingside have been weakening rather than attacking. The alternative 4... h5 has the drawback of vacating square g5 for White's minor pieces.

5.g4 ♗d7 6.♘c3 e6 7.♗e3 ♕b6 8.♘ge2 c5 9.♕d2 ♘c6

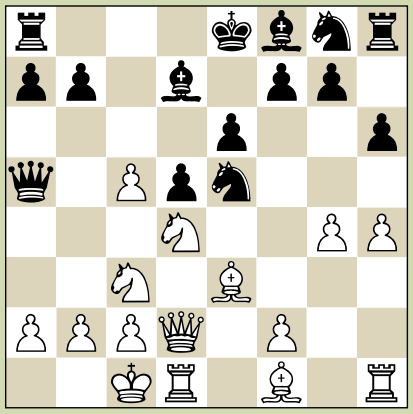


10.0-0-0
The critical continuation. Earlier this year, Grandelius played 10.f4 against Hillarp Persson in Stockholm. After 10...cxd4 11.♘xd4 ♗c5 Black had no opening problems. White cannot prevent a wholesale exchange on d4, after which White would be better off with his pawns on their starting squares.

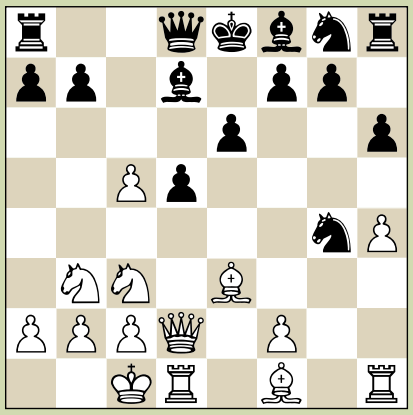
10...♕a5 A good alternative was 10...c4, but I wanted to give White the chance to fight an open battle.

11.dxc5
And Grandelius picks up the gauntlet. The alternative was 11.♔b1, after which I had planned 11...c4, followed by 12...b5.

11...♘xe5 12.♘d4

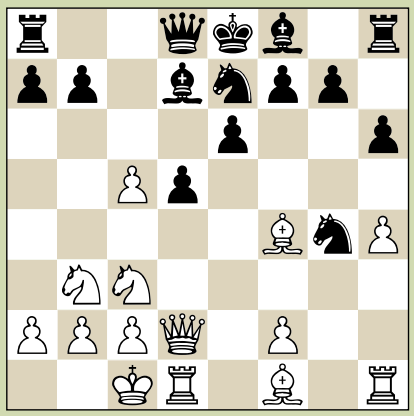


12...♘xg4
The most ambitious move. Black is aiming for a mighty pawn front in the centre and on the kingside, and is prepared to withstand the white pressure on his position. The alternative was 12...♗xc5, possibly followed by 13.♘b3 ♗xe3 14.♕xe3 ♕c7 15.♖e1 ♘xg4 16.♘xd5! ♕d6 17.♕d4, and now Black can largely solve his positional problems with 17...♔f8!.
13.♘b3
Before playing his bishop, White first covers the outpost on c5 with tempo.
13...♕d8 There is no other square.

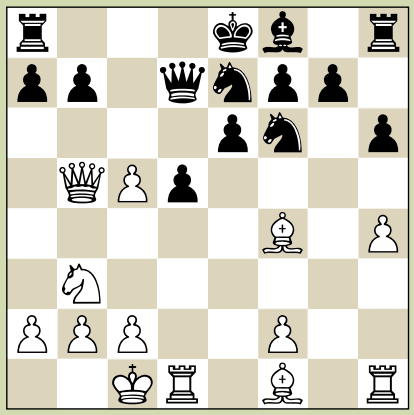


14.♗f4
The most obvious and most direct continuation. White is threatening to play his knight to b5 with great force. Remarkably enough, the computer prefers the alternative 14.♗d4, centralizing the bishop and increasing the pressure without creating any direct threats. After 14.♗d4 ♘e7 15.♖g1 ♘f6 16.♖e1 ♖c8 17.♔b1 Black continues to find it difficult to complete the development of his kingside, but I didn't worry too much about this at the time. Looking back, however, I must admit that Black would not have had it easy then.

14...♘e7
The best move. Black allows the knight on b5, intending to put his king's knight on c6 after the swap on b5.

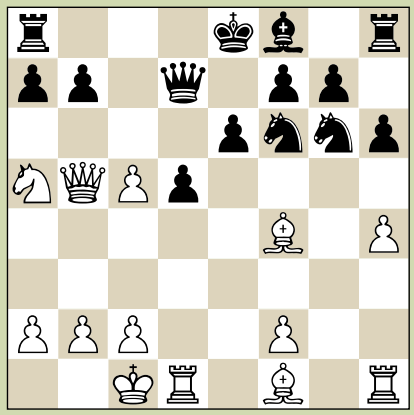


15.♕e2
Before playing his knight, Grandelius first positions his queen.
I had mainly expected the immediate 15.♘b5, planning to meet 15...♗xb5 16.♗xb5+ ♘c6 17.♘d4 with 17...♕d7. It looks dangerous to put the queen on the white king's bishop's diagonal, but White will be unable to exploit this. Black will maintain his presence on c6. With 18.♕e2 White can increase the pressure, but after 18...♘f6 19.♖hg1 ♗xc5 20.♖xg7 ♘e4 Black has a reasonable position. His pieces coordinate well and White's attacking chances are not dangerous.
15...♘f6 16.♘b5 ♗xb5 17.♕xb5+ ♕d7

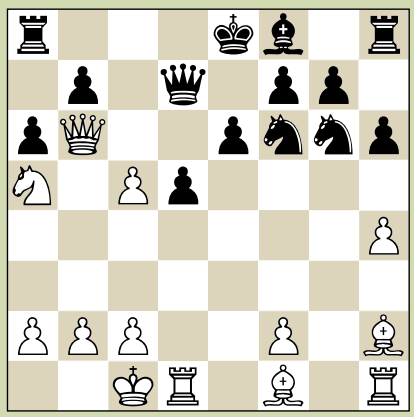


18.♘a5
The point of White's play. He has developed a dangerous initiative on the queenside, so Black cannot really cover his b-pawn. But he has other resources.
18...♘g6

First the white queen's bishop is forced to show its hand.



19.♗h2
Understandable in itself. White wants to keep his bishop on the b8-h2 diagonal without an annoying knight sortie to e4. Afterwards, Grandelius thought that 19.♗g3 would have been better, while I had mainly worried about 19.♗e3. Neither bishop move is clearly stronger than the text:
A) 19.♗g3 ♘e4 20.♘xb7 ♘xg3 21.fxg3 ♗e7 leads to approximate equality.
B) 19.♗e3 ♕xb5 20.♗xb5+ ♔d8 21.♘xb7+ ♔c7 22.c6 ♘g4 23.♗d4, and now Black can maintain the positions of his knights with 23...h5!. The position is dynamically balanced.
19...a6 20.♕b6
Very tempting. White increases the pressure on the enemy position. The computer also likes this queen move initially. But with subtle play Black still manages to get an advantage now. Stronger was 20.♕xd7+ ♔xd7 21.♘xb7 ♘xh4 22.c4!, with sufficient compensation for the pawn.



20...♕c8!
Such a move is easily overlooked.

CALLE ERLANDSSON

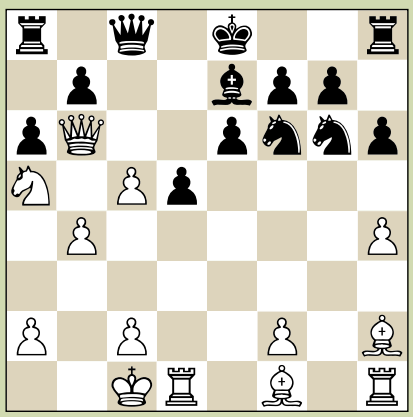
Jan Timman could not but feel at home in the Hall of Mirrors of the Hipp Theatre, where he had already played 70 games in previous years.

Black withdraws his queen to vacate square d7 for the knight. Now White will find it hard to maintain his outpost on c5.

21.b4 Not exactly an ideal move, but after the alternative 21.♘xb7 ♘d7 22.♘d6+ ♗xd6 23.♕xd6 ♕xc5 he would hardly have sufficient compensation for the pawn.

21...♗e7

It is high time to complete the development of the kingside.



22.♕xb7

Now that he has been forced to weaken his queenside, White is prepared to exchange the queens.

The alternative was 22.♘xb7, after which Black grabs the advantage with 22...0-0 23.♘d6 ♕d7. White's initiative has petered out and Black can take over the attack.

22...♕xb7 23.♘xb7 ♘e4

Of course. Black takes the initiative.

24.h5

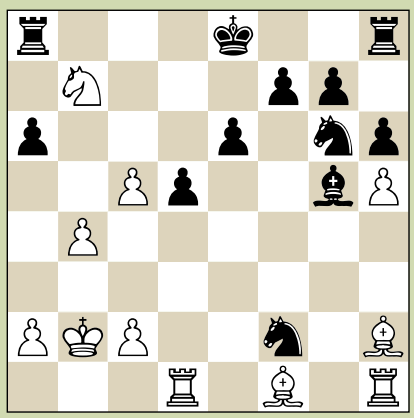
White continues to fight for the initiative, but although this is risky, it is the correct practical decision in view of looming time-trouble. In addition, the alternative 24.♗g3 would boil down to a clear admission that his 19th move was wrong.

24...♗g5+

Forcing the king to a less good square.

25.♔b2 ♘xf2

The point of the previous move. Black is threatening to take the rook with check, giving White no time to capture on g6. Now Grandelius played an amazing move that took me completely by surprise.



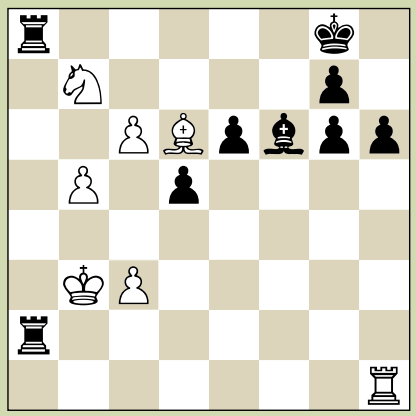
26.♗xa6!

This piece sacrifice is an ultimate attempt to make the queenside pawn majority tell after all. I had less than 20 minutes left on the clock and decided to look for a practical solution to the positional problem.

26...♘xd1+

Together with the next two moves, this is a plan to neutralize the white pawn superiority, but it turns out to be less than watertight. During the game I had the feeling that taking the bishop was objectively best. The computer agrees, but is eventually forced to adjust its initial assessment that it yields Black a large advantage.

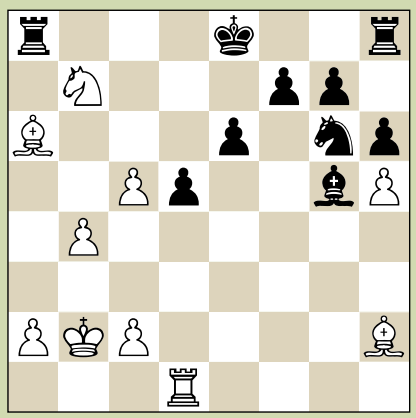
The main line goes as follows: 26...♖xa6 27.hxg6 fxg6 28.b5 ♖a4 29.♖df1! (stronger than 29.♔b3 ♖h4!) 29...0-0 (there's nothing better than castling) 30.♗d6 ♗f6+ 31.♔b3 ♖fa8 (threatening mate in one) 32.c6 ♘xh1 33.♖xh1 ♖xa2 34.c3



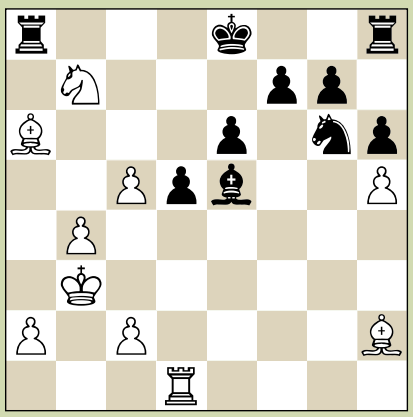
ANALYSIS DIAGRAM

and in this complicated position the computer opines that Black will be able to maintain a slight advantage with 34...d4.

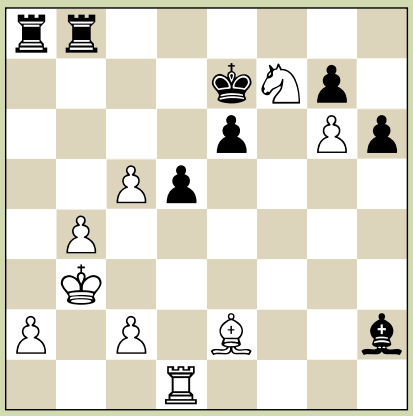
27.♖xd1



27...♗f6+
Forcing the king to a better square, but I thought I would take the bishop to e5 in order to restrict the activity of the white queen's bishop. I could also have played 27...♗f4, but I was afraid that the knight would be cut off from the action after a swap on f4. However, it's not that bad. After 28.♗xf4 ♘xf4 29.♘d6+ ♔e7 30.♗b7 ♖ad8 Black is ready to sacrifice an exchange on d6, with good play.
28.♔b3 ♗e5

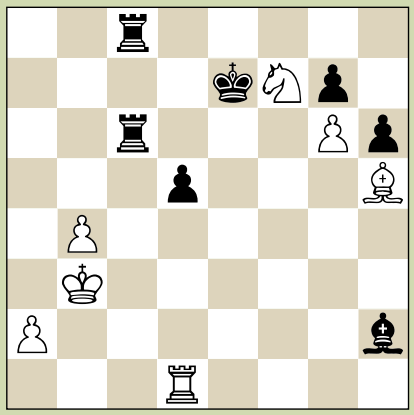


29.♘d6+?
Check with the wrong piece. After 29.♗b5+ White would have been better, the idea being to meet a black king move with 30.♗g1, when the white majority remains very dangerous. A possible continuation is 29...♔f8 30.♗g1 ♘f4 31.c6, and now taking on h5 is too slow. 31...g5! 32.hxg6 fxg6 would probably yield Black just enough counterplay.
29...♔e7 30.hxg6 ♗xh2 31.♘xf7 ♖hb8 32.♗e2



This is the position White had aimed for, and at first sight it does look promising. But Black has a surprise up his sleeve.

32...♖a5!
Suddenly White can no longer cover his foremost c-pawn, so that he will lose the pride and joy of his position.
33.c6 ♖c5
Black continues to harass the unfortunate pawn.
34.c4
Opening the game; but this won't help White either.
34...♖xc6 35.cxd5 exd5 36.♗h5 ♖bc8



Threatening to penetrate on c3. The rest is a matter of technique.
37.♖d3 ♖c4 38.♖h3 ♗f4 39.a3 d4 40.♔a4 ♖c3 41.♖h4 ♖a8+ 42.♔b5 ♖b8+ 43.♔a4 ♗c1 44.b5 ♖a8+
White resigned.

I was back in the tournament, but I would have to win one of my white games against Hammer and Fressinet, which I didn't manage. On the contrary; I was happy to get away with a draw in both cases after bending the bow too much. I was not the only player whose chances of tournament victory were almost cancelled out by an early defeat. Hammer, who had done very well of late, lost a winning position to Blomqvist in Round 2. This left only the winners of the first round: Fressinet and Smith. The latter's performance in particular was sensational. Smith, who lives in Lund, had also participated six years ago, but without much success. His rating hadn't improved since, and he still wasn't a grandmaster. But this time he adhered to the motto of his book *Pump up your rating*. During the final banquet, Fressinet said that Smith had operated like a 2600+ player during the tournament. In the

CALLE ERLANDSSON

Swedish IM Axel Smith adhered to the motto of his book *Pump Up Your Rating* with a 2681 performance.

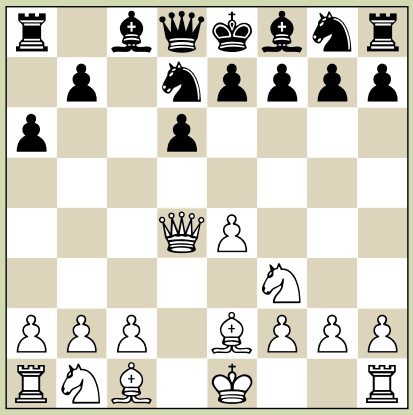
Malmö 2014 — **cat. XIV**

					1	2	3	4	5	6		TPR
1	**Laurent Fressinet**	GM	FRA	2711	*	½	½	1	½	1	3½	2711
2	**Axel Smith**	IM	SWE	2478	½	*	1	0	½	1	3	2681
3	**Jan Timman**	GM	NED	2615	½	0	*	1	½	½	2½	2581
4	**Nils Grandelius**	GM	SWE	2587	0	1	0	*	½	1	2½	2587
5	**Jon Ludvig Hammer**	GM	NOR	2638	½	½	½	½	*	0	2	2505
6	**Erik Blomqvist**	GM	SWE	2492	0	0	½	0	1	*	1½	2457

final round, the sensation could have been complete. Fressinet and Smith were level at three points each, and while Fressinet agreed a fairly quick draw with Hammer, Smith built up a promising position against Grandelius. Then something went wrong. Smith allowed a spectacular counter-attack, with the result that the Elo favourite carried off the highest honour after all. Fressinet owed his tournament victory mainly to the following game.

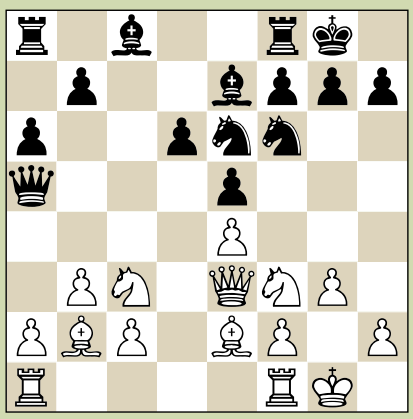
SI 1.4 – B51
Laurent Fressinet
Nils Grandelius
Malmö 2014 (3)

1.e4 c5 2.♘f3 d6 3.♗b5+ ♘d7 4.d4 cxd4 5.♕xd4 a6 6.♗e2



The usual approach is taking on d7, but recent practical examples have shown that this doesn't yield much. Therefore, Fressinet goes for a different opening strategy: aiming for a Sicilian-type position of a slightly unusual character.

6...♘gf6 7.0-0 e5 8.♕e3 ♘c5 9.♘c3 ♗e7 10.b3 0-0 11.♗a3 ♘e6 12.g3 ♕a5 13.♗b2



13...♘c5

Black has handled his opening problems well. Now a very good alternative for returning the knight to c5 was 13...♕c5. After the queen exchange Black would be fairly comfortable.

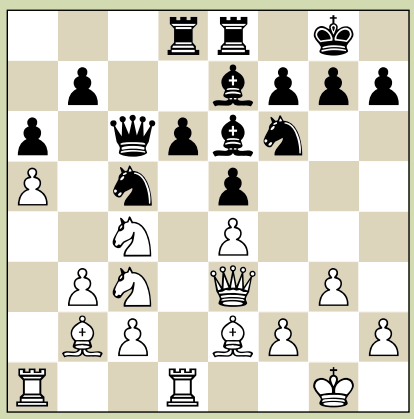
14.♘d2 ♗e6

Now White gets a positional advantage. Good was 14...b5, intending to create space on the queenside.

15.a4

A standard move in the Sicilian. Now White has square c4 for his minor pieces.

15...♖fe8 16.♘c4 ♕c7 17.a5 ♖ad8 18.♖fd1 ♕c6

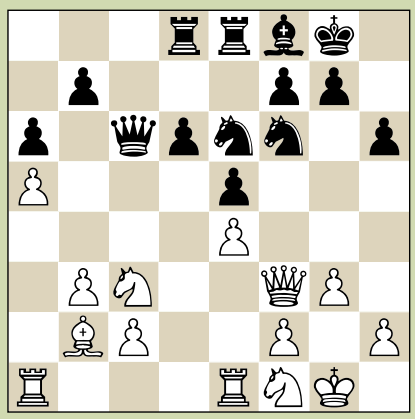


19.♘d2

But this is inconsistent. White withdraws his knight to cover the e-pawn, but in doing so relieves the pressure on the enemy position. The knight was very well positioned on c4: by keeping an eye on the black e-pawn it prevented Black from playing the thematic advance ...d6-d5.

There was nothing wrong with 19.f3, followed by playing the king to g2, when White exerts unpleasant pressure on the black position.

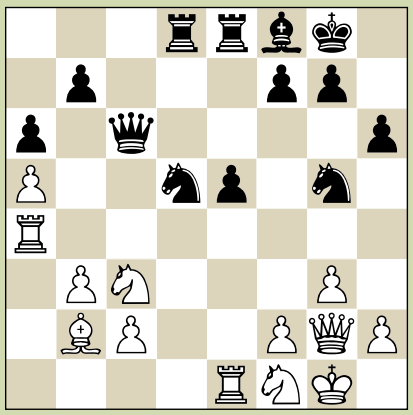
19...h6 20.♗f3 ♗f8 21.♘f1 ♗g4 22.♗xg4 ♘xg4 23.♕f3 ♘f6 24.♖e1 ♘e6



CALLE ERLANDSSON

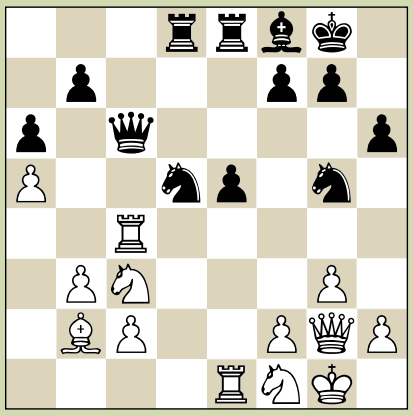
Top-seed Laurent Fressinet, rated 2711, lived up to expectations winning the 23rd Sigeman tournament with a 2711 performance.

Black has equalized. **25.♖a4 ♘g5 26.♕g2 d5** Black makes this advance fairly late in the game. Now White must be careful. **27.exd5 ♘xd5**



28.♖c4

Fressinet took his time for this move. Strictly speaking, it would be desirable to swap on d5, but after 28.♘xd5 Black has the surprising intermediate move 28...e4!, with advantage for Black. It is also clear that White is still struggling with a slight problem around his king after his 19th move.

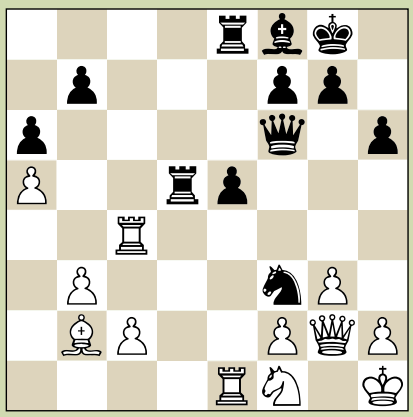


28...♕f6

Black could have exploited this slight problem now, as he had a hidden drawing combination starting with 28...♘f4!. This surprising move works because the black queen on c6 is covered, while the white rook on e1 is not. After, for example, 29.♖xc6 ♘xg2, both rooks would be attacked, resulting in the loss of an exchange. This also applies to the line 29.gxf4 ♘f3+ 30.♔h1 ♘xe1.

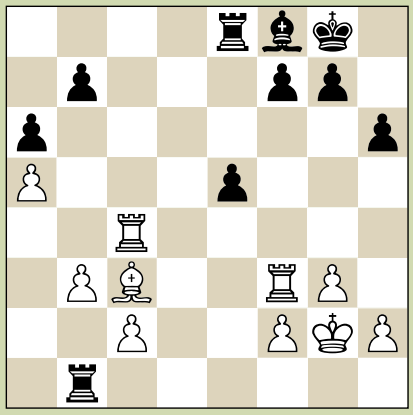
So there is no choice but to play 29.♕xc6, after which Black has the perpetual check mechanism 29...♘gh3+ 30.♔h1 ♘xf2+.

29.♘xd5 ♘f3+ 30.♔h1 ♖xd5



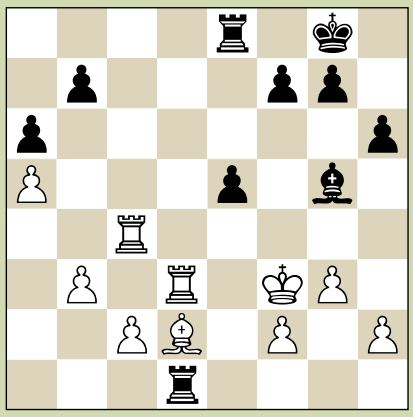
31.♖e3! Now White has re-established control. He can afford to allow a black rook on the back rank, as the queens will soon disappear.

31...♖d1 32.♕xf3 ♕xf3+ 33.♖xf3 ♖xf1+ 34.♔g2 ♖b1 35.♗c3



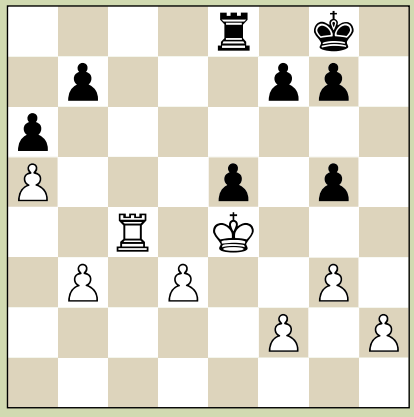
35...♖c1 Losing even more ground. Necessary was 35...♖d1 in order to redeploy the rook at once. **36.♗d2 ♖d1 37.♖d3** White has a large advantage, because the black rook on the bottom rank is out of play.

37...♗e7 38.♔f3 ♗g5



39.♗xg5 Liquidating to a rook ending in which White has two important trumps: the open c-file and a far more active king. Yet the position is anything but clearly winning.

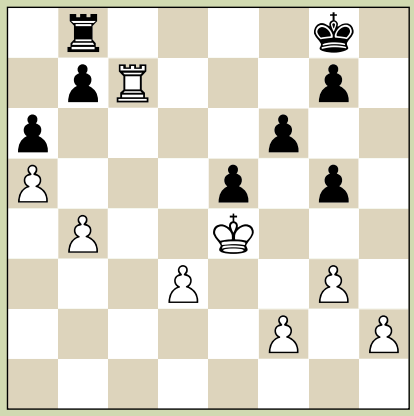
39...♖xd3+ 40.cxd3 hxg5 41.♔e4



41...f6 Allowing the white rook onto the seventh rank, which means that Black is past redemption.

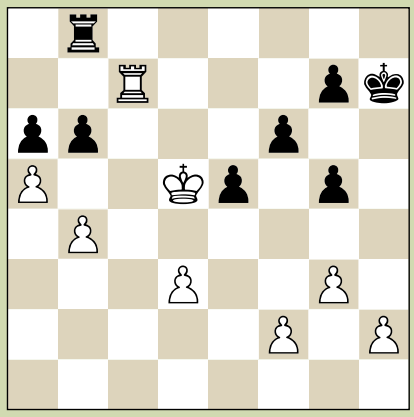
His only chance was 41...♖e7, which Grandelius probably didn't want to play in view of 42.♔f5, after which 42...f6 is impossible due to 43.♔g6. But Black has 42...g6+ 43.♔f6 ♖e6+ 44.♔xg5 ♔g7, and winning will be a difficult technical job.

42.♖c7 ♖b8 43.b4



To prepare White's final trick.

43...♔h7 44.♔d5 b6



45.b5!

The idea behind White's 43rd move. This breakthrough decides at once.

45...axb5 46.a6 ♖d8+ 47.♔c6 b4 48.♔b7 b3 49.♖c3

Black resigned. ■

Hans Ree

Man of Iron principles

Mikhail Botvinnik – The Life and Games of a World Chess Champion, by Andrew Soltis, might be seen as a sequel to his fine work *Soviet Chess 1917-1991*. About the new biography **Hans Ree** has one small complaint. He wants more of it.

Why was there no biography of the great Mikhail Botvinnik before, at least not one that I know of? One reason may be that we already know so much about him and about his games from publications by himself and others. Another reason may be that it is a daunting task to describe the life of a player whose career at the top spanned more than 30 years. Minimal requirements for the biographer are that he knows Russian and knows a lot about Soviet chess and Soviet society in general. Andrew Soltis, author of *Soviet Chess 1917-1991* (published in 2000), is well-qualified on both accounts.

Looking at the giants

In August and September 1946, the first international post-war super-tournament was held in the Dutch city of Groningen. Alekhine had died in March of that year, Reshevsky and Fine had private reasons for not coming, and Keres, as was to become clear to the general chess world later, was prevented from going by the Soviet authorities. But there still was a mighty contingent from the Soviet Union, headed by Botvinnik.

I was one year old at the time, too young to realize the importance of the event. The future Dutch grandmaster Hein Donner was 19, and travelled from The Hague to Groningen to observe the giants. Much later, in 1977, he would describe his impressions, which were also included in *The King*.

After depicting Arnold Denker as a man roughly 10 feet tall, with the athletic build and the sparkling white teeth of the typical American, only more so, Donner comes to Euwe: 'I also saw Euwe. He had once spoken to me before, in Amsterdam, and his kindness had always astonished me, for how could someone of real importance pay attention to me?'

But to Donner, even the venerated Max Euwe was not the greatest of them all. He wrote: 'And then I saw Botvinnik! Smaller than the others maybe, hardly nine feet, but with the emotionless face of the man who has seen everything and has cut the ties with the rest of the world; the eyes looking inward, as if rejoicing in the deep pleasure of his rich mental life. I saw the strange curvature of his forehead, and as in a glass skull I saw his immense lobes, which had reinvented the game of chess and given it a new meaning. There he stood, the tremendous one.'

Not everyone present at the tournament would have expressed his admiration in the flowery language that Donner used more than 30 years later, but the awe that Botvinnik was held in was general and had good grounds.

Prelude to the World Championship

Born in 1911, he had been one of the best players in the world since the early 1930s, and in 1946 he was generally seen as the best. He had won the 14th Soviet championship of 1945 with the fantastic score of 15 out of 17, three points ahead of Boleslavsky and five ahead of Bronstein. It was his fifth Soviet championship title, his sixth if you include the Absolute Championship of 1941.

Although retroactive historical ratings should be taken with a grain of salt, I had a look at Jeff Sonas's chessmetrics website for his rating list of August 1946, the month that the Groningen tournament started. Botvinnik, far ahead of the crowd, had been given a rating of 2864. The numbers two and three were Najdorf and Keres, with 2767 and 2762 points.

I was a bit surprised to see Najdorf so high on Sonas's list and more surprised – shocked even – to see Euwe at 34 with 2620 points. In 1939, when war broke out in Europe, he had still

been number 6, according to Sonas. What had Euwe done wrong in the meantime to fall so low?

Chessmetrics notwithstanding, Groningen would turn into a race for victory between Botvinnik and Euwe. Soltis writes that Botvinnik had come to the tournament with the firm conviction that if Euwe won it, he would be proclaimed World Champion by FIDE, which for the first time in chess history had managed to extend its power over the championship. So Botvinnik had to win, or at least prevent Euwe from winning, to keep his aspirations for the world championship alive. I wonder if any of the Dutch chess enthusiasts was aware of the grave implications of the tournament in Botvinnik's view. Probably not.

After a dramatic last round in which both Botvinnik and Euwe lost their game, Botvinnik finished half a point ahead of Euwe. Smyslov, in third place, trailed Botvinnik by two points.

MAX EUWE CENTRE AMSTERDAM

Nottingham 1936. Max Euwe (35) and Mikhail Botvinnik (25) are engaged in 'the most exciting ending of the tournament' (Alekhine). The game ended in a draw when the Dutchman missed a win one move before the end. Botvinnik tied for first with Capablanca, his first big success abroad.

Food habits

In his memoir *Achieving the Aim*, Botvinnik noted that food was very modest in Groningen. Fortunately, his meagre rations were supplemented by the Soviet embassy in The Hague.

Was the food really so modest? Economically, the Netherlands was still suffering from the war, but the players were staying in the best hotel in Groningen. What's more, the tournament book by Euwe and Kmoch gives the names of more than a hundred sponsors of the event, among them five hotels and four restaurants. Were they really unable to feed the chess players well?

Indeed it seems so, as Botvinnik was not the only participant who was not quite satisfied. In the tournament book, Hans Kmoch quotes Tartakower, who gave vent to his displeasure in his own typical ironic way: 'Excellent! Just delicious! When you realize that every day we get fish as a starter, fish as the main course and fish as dessert...'

After the tournament the players, officials and journalists were invited to a reception at the Soviet embassy, where they found, as Kmoch put it, a mountain landscape of delicacies and bottles.

It would not be the only occasion when Botvinnik had problems with Dutch cuisine. In 1969, he shared first place with Geller at the tournament in Wijk aan Zee. At the final banquet (a rather grandiose word for the traditional pea soup dinner) he liked the soup, but was unpleasantly surprised when he found that the soup, with bread and cheese, was not a starter, but the entire meal.

Still, the disciplined Botvinnik was far from a glutton. Soltis relates that when Efim Geller came to Botvinnik's dacha to help him with his preparation, he fled after five days because he felt starved there. Later Botvinnik would write: 'Alas, Geller could not fight because of his tendency to epicureanism. Apparently, to become World Champion it's useful to be something of a puritan.'

Soltis also gives Yuri Averbakh's story about Averbakh's wife bringing a delicious cake to Botvinnik's dacha for lunch. The whole company enjoyed it heartily, but Botvinnik waited till dinner for his piece of cake, when he was sure that nobody had been poisoned. That's how Averbakh sees it, but maybe Botvinnik was just not very hungry.

Slim, but densely structured

Victory in Wijk aan Zee, shared or not, would be a highlight in the career of most top players, but Soltis devotes only three lines of text to Botvinnik's victory in 1969, plus a very interesting annotated game against Lubosh Kavalek. All in all, Botvinnik's final 32 years are treated in only 20 pages. This was not the most important, eventful or interesting period of his chess life, of course, but still, 20 pages for 32 years is quite scant. All in all, it seems that a scholarly tome of a thousand pages could easily have been extracted from the abundance of sources that Soltis has consulted. But that was not the work he wanted to write; he has written a book that is readable for the general chess enthusiast interested in history.

The main text of Soltis's book comprises 249 pages, with many games interspersed, 'more than 85', a reviewer more diligent than me has reported. This is followed by 24 pages of annexes, among them an extensive bibliography and source notes.

Hans Ree

I look at some other biographies on my shelves. Compared with Wolfgang Kamm's biography of Siegbert Tarrasch (877 big and densely printed pages) or Daniel Ackermann's book on Janowsky (723 pages), this is a small book, though with a high density of information. And better written than these two bulky tomes.

Soltis obviously knows much more about Botvinnik's life than he has used for this book, which is not a bad thing. Although he makes extensive use of publications that appeared after 2000, it goes without saying that many events in Botvinnik's life had already been covered in his earlier book *Soviet Chess*.

No parrot this time

Apparently, he doesn't like to repeat himself more than necessary, so that some anecdotes that I found amusing in 2000 are missing here. For instance the story of the parrot that had escaped from a circus troupe and was hiding somewhere in the Estrada Theatre in Moscow when the world championship match between Botvinnik and Petrosian was played there. At some point, Botvinnik was apparently furious because he thought that one of the spectators was imitating bird calls to irritate him.

The same goes for some other stories illustrating Botvinnik's suspicious nature. One I especially liked in 2000 was about his question to Karpov after he had heard about Karpov's secret meetings with Fischer: 'Are you sure that it was Fischer and not his double?' Soltis may already have had his doubts about the veracity of the latter story when he wrote *Soviet Chess* and probably didn't want to stretch his luck by repeating it. And anyway, Botvinnik's mistrustful nature is well-documented in this biography, too.

Bulgakov's vodka-drinking cat

I like pursuing trivia, such as Botvinnik's eating habits and now the possible relation between one of his games and Mikhail Bulgakov's *The Master and Margarita*. Soltis gives the game Riumin-Botvinnik from Moscow 1935 and adds: 'When Mikhail Bulgakov's masterwork, *The Master and Margarita*, appeared 32 years later, chess players tried to determine whether the game by the vodka-drinking cat Begemot was based on a real event. The evidence that it stems from Riumin-Botvinnik was discussed in the pages of *64* in the 1980s, but without reaching a definite conclusion.'

Of course I tried to form my own opinion on this interesting subject, but to no avail.

Bulgakov wrote: 'Three white pawns, armed with halberds, were staring in bewilderment at a bishop who was waving his crozier and pointing forwards to where Woland's black knights sat mounted on two hot-blooded horses, one pawing the ground of a white square, the other on a black square.'

Three white pawns, those might be f4, g4 and h3 from Riumin-Botvinnik, or they might not. A bishop pointing forwards to two black knights is hardly a defining trait. And two black knights on hot-blooded horses on different-coloured squares, that could be almost any game.

'The king is on square g2,' said Woland (the devil), without looking at the board. In check on g2, Woland meant, a check which indeed occurred in Riumin-Botvinnik, as in thousands of other games. The evidence for a connection between Botvinnik's game and that of the cat Begemot is slim, but it was a good pretext to look at Bulgakov's novel again. And for believers in the connection: note that the drunken cat was White, as identifying him with Botvinnik would be sacrilegious.

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A clever prankster

More trivia. From Genna Sosonko we have learned that the famous expression 'As Lenin put it, chess is the gymnasium of the mind' was an invention of Yakov Rokhlin's, a strong player and energetic organizer. Lenin never said or wrote this, but Rokhlin could use the quote for the propagation of chess and could trust in the pre-digital age that no-one would check the 45 volumes of Lenin's collected works to see if the quote was really there. And who in the Soviet Union would even dare to question whether Lenin had really expressed this wise sentiment?

In this book we see some other performances of Rokhlin as a prankster.

In 1927, after losing a game against Botvinnik, he was telephoned by Alexander Ilyin-Genevsky, who wanted to publish the moves in his *Pravda* chess column. 'Completely uninteresting', said Rokhlin, but when Ilyin-Genevsky insisted, he skilfully dictated a game that was interesting, but invented on the spur of the moment.

In 1933, Botvinnik and Rokhlin travelled together to a holiday home in the Caucasus mountains. Botvinnik's mother had implored him not to go because of reports of a typhus outbreak, but Rokhlin had convinced her that he and Botvinnik would be safe if he brought powdered naphthalene with him, which he would use to surreptitiously disinfect fellow-passengers on the train south.

Botvinnik would write later: 'Rokhlin kept his word. I died laughing while he sprinkled himself, me and our fellow-passengers on the train. He would get into conversation with them, sprinkle the naphthalene into their pockets, while continuously expressing sincere annoyance, along with them, at the unpleasant smell in the train.' A clever rascal it seems, this Rokhlin.

No cuddler of kittens?

Soltis starts his preface to the book by quoting his wife Marcy: 'Why, my wife asked me, would anyone want to read about such a cold personality as Mikhail Botvinnik?' There are many good answers to that question, of course. Botvinnik was not a gentle soul, but that's not essential for a biography. In his notes, Soltis quotes Bent Larsen, who had said in 1990:

> 'When Ilyin-Genevsky insisted, he skilfully dictated a game that was interesting, but invented on the spur of the moment.'

'The man who was number one in Soviet chess during the Stalin years – well, you don't expect him to be kind, to cuddle kittens and to pat little children on the head.'

Genna Sosonko, whose name is often mentioned in Soltis's notes, wrote in his book *The Reliable Past* about a conversation in 1948: 'Euwe told me that while in Moscow he asked Botvinnik: "Well, where are X and Y?", whom he remembered from his pre-war visit to the USSR in 1934. "They have shown themselves to be Enemies of the State," was the response. "And what about Z?" persisted Euwe. "He too," glowered the Patriarch.' This is chilling.

Maybe even more chilling is this quote from an article that Botvinnik wrote in 1936, jointly with Lev Spokoiny, the editor of *Chess in the USSR*: 'If comrade Barulin thinks that his problem activity is absolutely autonomous and self-sufficing, then that's bad, not for the mass chess movement and not for the composition that will develop jointly with actual play; so much the worse for comrade Barulin and for similar composers, who are good for nothing. Theories of art for art's sake are resolutely condemned in the USSR, and our composers are well aware of it.'

What's the problem, a modern reader might think. An argument about the right way to compose chess problems seems innocent to us. But as Yuri Averbakh has pointed out, Botvinnik's words, written at the height of Stalin's Terror, conveyed a clear and serious threat. Botvinnik's article may have nothing to do with it, but in fact the problem composer and chess journalist Mikhail Barulin was arrested in 1941 and died in a Soviet camp in 1943. Botvinnik had no regrets and republished his article in his magnificent four-volume *Analytical and Critical Work*.

Finding peace with former enemies

Without giving up his strong opinions and principles, Botvinnik mellowed towards the end of his life. He made up with his former collaborator Yakov Estrin, with whom he had fallen out, and regretted that he had not been in time to make peace with Petrosian, the man who had taken the title from him.

Soltis writes rather movingly: 'After the death of his beloved (wife) Gayane on December 4, 1987, he often spent five days alone at the *dacha* and was visited by relatives on weekends. But he managed on his own and even swept snow from his driveway as late as February 1995. His insomnia returned. If he couldn't sleep, he would get dressed, open a window of the *dacha*, sit in a chair and study opening positions, such as 1.e4 e6 2.d4 d5 3.♘c3 ♘e7 and 3.♘d2 ♘e7, according to Igor Botvinnik.'

He spent his last days dictating ideas about Pioneer, his ill-fated chess program. He died, 83 years old, on May 5th, 1995. For his funeral he had ordered: 'No chess players. I want to leave quietly.' ■

Dimitri Reinderman

CURRENT ELO: 2617
DATE OF BIRTH: August 12, 1972
PLACE OF BIRTH: Hoorn, the Netherlands
PLACE OF RESIDENCE: Amsterdam, the Netherlands

What is your favourite colour?
I don't really have one, but I like purple.

What kind of food makes you happy?
Asian and Italian (vegetarian) food.

And what drink?
Tea and ice tea.

Who is your favourite author?
Terry Pratchett.

What is the best book you ever read?
Nick Hornby: *High Fidelity*.

What is your favourite movie?
Monty Python and the Holy Grail.

What is your favourite TV series?
The Big Bang Theory.

Do you have a favourite actor?
No, but I've seen a lot of movies with Bruce Willis, Johnny Depp or Woody Allen.

And a favourite actress?
Scarlett Johansson.

What music do you listen to?
Pop music in general, indie (shoegaze and tweepop) and modern classical.

Do you have a favourite painter?
Salvador Dalí.

What was your best result ever?
9½/11 in Wijk aan Zee B, 1998 (sharing first place with Kasimdzhanov) and winning the Dutch Championship last year.

What was your best game ever?
Reinderman-Rublevsky, Aix-les-Bains 2011, was probably my best attempt to play like (and at the level of) Carlsen.

Who is your favourite player of all time?
Loek van Wely. He's the coolest!

Is there a chess book that had a profound influence on you?
Chess for Tigers by Simon Webb. It taught me there is more to playing chess than just finding the best moves.

What was the most exciting chess game you ever saw?
Ivanov-Zaltsman, New York 1983. White won with bishop, knight and four connected passed pawns against queen and rook.

What are chess players particularly good at (except for chess)?
A lot of chess players are good at table tennis.

Do chess players have typical shortcomings?
Their choice of clothing could be better (or maybe I should just speak for myself?).

What is it that you appreciate most in a person?
Playfulness.

What is it that you dislike in a person?
Anti-social behaviour.

Do you have any superstitions concerning chess?
During tournaments, I see in any correlation a n=1 causality. If my choice of tea flavour in the morning was Earl Grey and I win that day, it can't be coincidence, right?

Who or what would you like to be if you weren't yourself?
A Radio DJ, or one of my cats.

Which three people would you like to invite for dinner?
The Dalai Lama, Feist and Martin Phillips (singer of The Chills).

What is the best piece of advice you were ever given?
One thing I learned from reading books of the Dalai Lama is that in general it's better not to be angry. A quote of the Buddha explains it: 'Holding on to anger is like grasping a hot coal with the intent of throwing it at someone else; you are the one who gets burned.'

Is there something you'd love to learn?
Everything about pop music, and I'm working on that. Currently I'm doing a video lectures course from the University of Rochester called 'History of Rock'.

What is your greatest fear?
Other people ('L'enfer, c'est les autres').

What would you save from your house if it were on fire?
Jareth and Mirri, my cats.

What will be the nationality of the 2050 chess world champion?
Transnistrian.

Is a knowledge of chess useful in everyday life?
I play a trivia app. Sometimes they ask questions about chess. Easy points!

What is the best thing that was ever said about chess?
'You cannot compare chess with anything. A lot of things can be compared with chess, but chess is just chess.' (Hein Donner, 1959).

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